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THE MULBERRY TREE

THE MULBERRY TREE

BY

WINIFRED JAMES

AUTHOR OF 'BACHELOR BETTY,' 'PATRICIA BARING,' 'LETTERS TO MY SON,' 'MORE LETTERS TO MY SON,' 'LETTERS OF A SPINSTER,' ETC.

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TO

THOSE WHO MADE MY JOURNEY A HAPPY ONE

BUT PRINCIPALLY TO

SNADDY

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THE MULBERRY TREE

TO ANYWHERE

II

TO ANYWHERE

HAVING lunched and talked, and talked and lunched with those whose work and whose pleasure it is to bring the ends of the earth together in Bow Street, my most immediate destiny is beginning to shape itself. The lamp and the staff have been given to me for guidance, and there remains nothing but the consideration of clothes. For my illumination a carefully prepared plan has been made out, and for my support a wallet of letters has been thoughtfully bestowed. The plan says Jamaica, Costa Rica, Panama, and perhaps Colombia. The letters say, "Good sirs, have consideration of this lonely madam, who by chance will come your way." The whole thing is the mulberry tree over again—with a difference, for this time I go my distances and make my adventure in my body as well as in my mind, with the same happy ignorance as to what will befall. Knowledge of geography I have none, for no place has any meaning to me till I have actually seen it. Little ideas of Jamaica as a hot place and belonging to Us, and of Panama as a "narrow neck of land" through which a canal is being cut, disturb the fine calm of my otherwise unbroken stupidity, but for the rest there is nothing to spoil the unknown. I am stepping out on to a road that leads to Anywhere, and although I have been Somewhere very often I have not been Anywhere since I left the mulberry tree.

THE MULBERRY TREE

I am far too old to get the little crowing sensation that comes into my throat as I think of it, and which belongs to the time when one grabbed ineffectually at lighted candles. But it's there, bless it. I swallow it every time, but it's there.

ON CLOTHES

III

ON CLOTHES

It is odd how one's chance wishes come running to one, while the things you concentrate upon and give your mind to getting, flee from you like the wild goats of the mountains. A month ago I inspected my wardrobe and thought what a pity it was that clothes lasted so long, and how nice it would be if something would occur to make it necessary to discard everything I possessed and start afresh with everything new. There are certain clothes that are injurious to one's personality to keep; one made a series of bad mistakes in this garment or allowed the wrong things to matter too deeply in that, and the happenings are stamped all over them in a pattern that will not wipe out. Of such there should be a periodical and ruthless clearance: but such purgings cost money. For me there could be but two reasons for their rejection: one, that they would not hold together any longer, and the other that I had grown out of them, which, at this stage of my development, God indeed forbid!

So I sighed and folded them away again. To-day I have ordered six new dresses. Five were sheer necessities, and the other the one piece of self-indulgence that is the right of all rich and generous natures. The five give me joy as a craftsman, inasmuch as I am satisfied that utility and a fair amount of beauty have gone to their combining; the other I did not need, I could

have done without, and I just had to have for sheer love of it. To-night when I go over the mercies of the day, I shall press my hands just a little bit tighter when it comes to the frock. May providence always keep me able to do the wrong thing at the right time.

The outfit grows apace. There are many more comfortable things than being fitted in a January frost for dresses that are to serve their purpose in the tropics, but I shall reap the benefit later. This morning after standing one hour and a half behind a shivering array of transparencies I took a navy blue nose to be thawed by lunch into a fine palpitating crimson for the afternoon campaign. A woman once said to me that her idea of hell was a cold place with noises, and I believe she has found it. I have two additions to make to it for mine, but as I would like to live peacefully with all men I will not make them here. It is certainly a cold place, I am sure of that.

ON COCKROACHES

IV

ON COCKROACHES

LUNCHED again to-day with the destiny-makers of Bow Street and broached an indelicate matter. One knows that on ships there is provision made against drowning, but there is none against cockroaches. I am afraid of cockroaches, and said so. If there were anything they knew to be peculiarly abhorrent to the cockroach that I could buy in a tin and entrench myself behind, perhaps the Board of Directors would tell me. I said it humbly.

The Board of Directors stirred its coffee in silence.

"There are *no* cockroaches on Our ships," it said at last haughtily.

I was frightened. A Board of Directors with a cold Eye is almost as terrifying as a cockroach.

"They have them on mail steamers," I said apologetically.

"I can quite believe that," said the Board of Directors, with no abatement of his aloofness; "but we don't."

There was nothing more to be said. The most helpful thing to do is to try and believe he speaks the truth—but they have such horrible black bodies and scrawly legs—men don't understand us. We were made that while we can carry mountains, our backs break under straws. If he has any nice feeling at all he will relent and send me a tin of * * *.

A STORM AND A SUNRISE

V

A STORM AND A SUNRISE

It is a blessed and comfortable thing after days and nights of buffetings, of dreads and fears and mortal pains, to slip into quiet seas and lounge about in the sunshine upon a deck that has learnt at last to know its place and keep it.

For the valiant little thing that has carried us one feels a sort of tenderness. At first in between the paroxysms I cursed her as comprehensively as I knew how. She looked like a lady and she lurched like a Covent Garden porter. I had paid four shillings and sixpence for that which was guaranteed to circumvent the worst gyrations of the most ill-conducted tub that ever took the water, and here was I on board a trim yacht-like craft and unable to retain for any appreciable time the services of even champagne and dry biscuit. For some days I lay so and watched the trunks sliding about the cabin floor and the bottles hurling themselves off the shelves. Even sleep came seldom, and when it came it came unkindly bringing with it a jumble of the waking ills. During the day the wind would quieten a little and there would be a comparative calm, but as the night shut down it rose again in a fury. There was no storm of thunder or rain, just this hurricane of wind with a white moon staring down on to the boiling sea : and the ship ploughing and shuddering through. She made one think of a plucky little sledge dog beset by a pack of

wolves. Sometimes when the howling grew unbearable I would get out of bed and go to the door leading out on to the deck : there was something less terrifying in seeing than in imagining; but in a little while I would go back again, for gazing out across an earthquake of water with unseen demons yelling round your head does not very successfully put your imaginings to sleep.

There came a night when no one was ashamed of being afraid. Perhaps there was one woman who did not care or who at least appeared as if she did not care, but that one was not I. We sat all together, very quiet, in the smoking room. If we had had the tongue to talk, against the tumult it would have been useless. The captain walked through, but no one spoke to him for every one had too much to ask. There was something about the way the chief engineer stuck to the bridge table that made one feel he was there for a purpose. He was just a little too calm and unconscious. I sat holding on to my chair listening, and drowning with every plunge of the ship. The boats could not live in a cauldron like that and lifebelts were not worth considering, but the moments before one lost consciousness, the horror of feeling nothing under one's feet—I once saw a rat drowning in a bucket. . . .

Some one admitted to being afraid. It was a relief to hear it spoken. All night long the lights were on in the cabins. I had often pictured myself in a shipwreck and at the crucial moment all my fears left me. I grew calm and strong and splendid and by my courage I helped others to be strong. That was in my imagination. When the possibility came uncomfortably near I was terribly afraid, my heart ran away like water, my eyes were stiff with fear. I could have helped no one.

As the night wore on the storm got fiercer. When I could not bear the horror alone I took my pillow to

some one else's cabin and lay there for a while. Fear was thick everywhere, it was like fumes that took one's senses away. One woman who was going out to be married wept.

Then at last when things were at their worst I shook myself up. If one were really going to the bottom the most one could get out of it would be to go to the bottom decently. I stood up straight, held on to the top bunk and said my prayers; it is always more satisfaction to say your prayers standing than kneeling because you can throw your head back better. I said, " If there is anybody to hear please listen. I don't want to die, I want to live. If You can let it be that way, I wish You would. But if You can't, make me that I am able to die decently and unafraid. I am very much afraid now and I hate to be afraid. And I am glad and not sorry for all the things I have done." Then I drew a deep breath and opened my eyes and it is true that I was not indecently afraid any more.

When the morning broke there was no abatement. Just after sunrise there came a crash. The ship shuddered. We held our breath and waited. She steadied herself and went on. In that crash a companion ladder had been carried away, a man injured, and iron railings crumpled up like hairpins: but it was the last gasp of the storm. Now we are lying like a lot of lazy lizards in the sun. On the port side the third officer is playing with one paint pot and on the starboard side the shy pink-cheeked apprentice is flirting with another. Everything is leisurely and glad. There has been a sweep upon yesterday's run and the penalty to the winner is cocktails all round. Even now the cocktails are advancing along the deck. Nothing promotes in me a keener sense of the world's and my own possibilities than does a cocktail. Champagne

makes me sad, wine makes me sleepy, but a cocktail tells me kindly, unfailingly—if a little fleetingly—that I am One of the Conquerors. Unless one is of an overpowering self-sufficiency such reminders do not come amiss.

* * * * * *

This morning at sunrise we passed Haiti. There was something tremendously dramatic about the first sight of it. A dark mass of mountains silhouetted against the sky and over it a great black cloud from which shot forked white tongues of flame. It was as if all the unrest and fever of men's minds had risen and gathered there like smoke from evil fires. As we came nearer, the dark outlines gave place to wooded hills that sloped gently down to the water's edge. Only when one lifted one's eyes to the mountains beyond did the feeling of things sinister and unknown come creeping back to the mind. Such a place sets the imagination stirring. The African in his native element ruling amid native conditions is all in the scheme of things: but the African in broadcloth, wearing his hat laboriously at the same angle as his continental gods and his mind at almost the same angle as his African forefathers; whose idea of heaven is Paris and whose conception of Haiti is plunder—one would like to see how it could be done outside of vaudeville. If it is not too difficult to get to Haiti I shall go. I have all the desires of the most intrepid and venturesome explorer held in check by a need for ice-water, a dread of dirt and discomfort, and an awful fear of spiders. Also I cannot ride. After that Haiti looks rather far away, but one never knows.

Early in the morning I got up and went on deck. For a while I had the deck to myself. Then through the doorway came a man in pyjamas. He stood aghast for a breathless moment at the entrance, and then

darted away up the deck and disappeared round the other side. You could hear the resentment running out of his heelless slippers as he flapped along to obscurity. I know him for the unbending gentleman who keeps his secrets at the table behind me. We have been out sixteen days and not spoken once. That, considering the fact that the whole company only numbers eleven, would seem rather a feat. But I am not attracted by his aridity and I have the feeling that he is actively repelled by my richnesses; therefore as we do not sit at the same table and are not called upon to pass each other anything, there is no excuse for conversation. For the rest he takes mid-morning lessons in Spanish from a lady of Costa Rica, plays bridge in the afternoon and evening and always has the air of being clean and tidy. I think it is a very good idea that he should improve his mind and take Spanish lessons, and as I do not want him for myself I don't mind in the least his playing bridge in the afternoon and evening. Also I am willing to put down his lack of interest in me to a strain of abnormality that may often be found in the most normal of creatures. But he may not have all the sunrises too.

There is a type of British male one meets travelling who does not recognize the existence of woman on a ship before nine in the morning or after ten-thirty at night. Pyjama-ed he holds the deck against intrusive female feet and guards the sunrise from our sacriligious eyes. He doesn't really care twopence about the sunrise, but he has established a tradition that the deck shall be his and the emptiness thereof during that time when the sun has been appointed by some overruling providence to make its first appearance for the day. Now in an ordinary way, I have a strong objection to getting up early. Neither do I care in the least about smashing

tradition just for the pure pleasure of being *ob*structive or *de*structive. But sometimes the wish to see beautiful things will overcome my accursed laziness. It is my ill-fortune that sunrises should occur at such inopportune hours as they do, but there it is, and no complaining on my part will alter things. Also I could wish when I come up with heart aflame to meet the new-born day, that all men in ill-fitting, unbecoming garments and of slippered feet and unshaven face should first be gone from sight. But I would not be so churlish as to demand it. He may be a blot, but he has his rights, and if I want any for myself I must grant them to others. That magnificent sense of justice makes me able to keep my gaze steadfastly upon the main theme and not allow it to be diverted by those objects which in any other case would intrude themselves unpleasantly before me.

To-morrow there is going to be another sunrise—this time over Jamaica—and the captain has invited me to get up in time for it. I think perhaps I ought. When one remembers how much men have yet to be taught, one feels how necessary it is to get up early. Also a great and uplifting patience comes over me. That, probably, is as well.

A DAY IN MYRTLE BANK, JAMAICA

VI

A DAY IN MYRTLE BANK

SUCH a day as yesterday bewilders one with regard to time. It began at five o'clock in the morning and ended at twelve o'clock at night. When nineteen hours are packed with happenings, when every minute gives some fresh sight and every hour some fresh development, it is difficult to believe that while yesterday was the seventeenth, to-day is still only the eighteenth.

The turmoil of arriving, the greetings and farewells, strange people to meet, black, brown and yellow faces, when one has been used only to white; unaccustomed buildings, the heat and glare of dusty streets; and at last by breakfast-time the big busy hotel swarming with people, and the comparative quiet of one's own room with the key on the inside.

All day a ceaseless crowd of people surged through the broad, tiled hall and the deep verandahs of the hotel. Outside the gate, in the glaring sunlight, a white-helmeted official stood regulating the traffic, and a constant stream of buggies—called here buses—flowed past the portico and wound round the gaudy bed of red and yellow cannas out into the street again.

And Americans all the time. Of the American in his own country I know nothing, but of the American abroad I have seen just a little. Before their speech discovers them utterly you may find them with your eyes. All women better dressed than most and all men worse

dressed than any, are surely and certainly Americans. The ordinary American woman will pay as much for the pressing of her clothes as the ordinary English woman will for the making of hers. And also ninety-nine times out of a hundred she knows *how* to put them on. But that she can go out, into the *daylight*, beside her man looking as he does, is to me an eternal and everlasting wonder. Is there any deep and unexplained reason why the coat-sleeve of the American man should cover the hands as far as the finger-nails, why the shoulder should project a good six inches beyond that limit set by the Creator even for the Goliaths of the universe: or why their hats should fit their heads even as forage caps would cover the dome of a cathedral? No more, perhaps the American says, than the English idiot has whose trousers are hitched up to his ears and whose hat covers his neck. But ours is an individual vice while the other is a national characteristic. I hope it is not offensive to ask, but it puzzles me.

Yesterday afternoon I sat for an hour in a sheltered corner of the hall and watched the people. The hotel was almost full when I arrived at nine o'clock in the morning. At eleven a tourist boat came in from New York on its way to the Islands and emptied four hundred and sixty-eight human beings into Kingston. Just as every one who stops at Colombo goes first to the G. O. H., so every one who puts his fleeting foot in Kingston lets it take him straight to Myrtle Bank. They came, the four hundred and sixty-eight, and I, who had been settled in for quite two hours looked on with the seasoned eye of the oldest inhabitant. Old, young, lean, fat, trim, dowdy: assured slips of girls who sauntered about as if they held the bag that could buy the universe; corsetted mammas, all shoulders and bust and no hips, sitting their chairs like the little

short-legged, painted figures that drove the toy tin carts of childhood, and looking on with the sharp alert gaze of watching birds. Cynical children with long legs and short socks who seemed to be stoically putting up with things; way-back fathers who came out of their fastnesses with a full purse, a great bewilderment and a fierce determination to pay no more for anything than it was worth and not knowing in the least what it *was* worth. Young men with padded shoulders, enormous trousers and bulgy-toed shoes tied with sash ribbons, spinsters out in their middle age to know the world, all except the cynical children, sworn as one man to see the most that could be seen and do the most that could be done in the time, all looking out for information with the same intentness as lizards look for flies, all with the same awful intelligence and the same nerve-destroying voices. To hear four hundred and sixty-eight American tourists talking together is like sitting out in the sun with your eyelids cut off. I know because although I have never sat out in the sun with my eyelids cut off, I have listened to four hundred and sixty-eight American tourists talking.

At the office counter a siege was going on. Rows of men and women too late for rooms were imploring the clerk to do the impossible. Through the hall came a group of white-uniformed German officers from the boat; big broad-shouldered men with hearty sensual faces and strong upstanding hair. At the stalls the tourists bought candy and lace bark, and tried on Yippi Yappas and Panamas; and soft-voiced negro bell boys went quickly to and fro with orders. And out beyond through the open doors of the hotel, lawns fringed with coconut palms ran down to the water's edge, and a blue sparkling sea merged at the horizon into a clear blue dome of sky. To be at most but sixteen

days away from ice and snow and fog is difficult to believe: and seeking a shady corner in which to rest, that ice and snow and fog should ever have existed seems a delusion of the brain. This is another world.

I lunched with three Englishmen—the only three in the hotel I believe—who had come up that morning from Panama and were on their way home. Then in the afternoon having hung out my frocks I went to sleep till tea-time. After tea I met more people and talked till it was time to dress for dinner, and at dinner I sat alone and watched the people.

There is nothing depresses me more than being hungry. After I had sat half an hour in my corner without being taken any notice of at all, I tried to catch a waiter on the wing. He nodded distractedly, flew past me and disappeared through the swing-door, for ever, as far as I was concerned. And another, and another—and another. I went on getting more and more low-spirited till at last I pulled myself together and became indignant.

"Will you," I said hotly to the nearest negro, "*begin* to bring me my dinner!"

He stopped suddenly and wheeled round facing me. His eyes were sorrowful; a sad little regretful smile played around his mouth and his voice was tender. The table was not his but another's.

"He is *veree* sorree mistress, he would not do it wilfulee, but he is *verree* busee."

When he was gone I knew that I had smiled and told him not to trouble; that I did not really mind being kept waiting. It was all wrong and untrue and certainly a bad precedent to establish, but still I was taken unawares. I have been kept waiting as long by indifferent or incompetent gentlemen in the West End, but never has one tried to smooth the way for his

confrère so exquisitely or bent his gaze upon me with such gentle sympathy and such lovely patience. He is a villain I feel sure. Only a villain would have known exactly the right words to use to an enraged and hungry woman. I hear it now, it lingers in my ears like a benediction. "He is veree sorree mistress——"

The night was a *festa*. Out in the garden Chinese lanterns hung like necklaces of glowing jewels between the palm trees. I don't know whether it is because they thrilled and fascinated so when one was a child that they still hold dominion over one in the grown-up years; but to my mind there is no decoration more beautiful than Chinese lanterns in the dark. Trembling there in mid-air, apparently held by nothing at all unless it is an invisible hand, they seem like enchanted balls; jade and topaz and ruby, carved and wrought with strange figures of fish and birds and flowers: wonders drawn out of the sea from a merman's palace.

On a platform on the grass and within the circle of the lanterns the band of the West India Regiment played music that set the feet twitching. A band of negro zouaves with full trousers tucked into white spats, scarlet and yellow coats over white jackets and white tasselled turbans, is a gay sight. Indoors the hotel band played for the dancers, and between the dances the people thronged the lawns: women in chiffons as bright as a field of poppies, black-faced men in white clothes, white-faced men in black ones, scarlet-coated officers from camp; and the unsettled traveller agape. Looking at some of the more unsophisticated of them I know now how wide open *my* mouth was when I got to Colombo from Australia.

Out in the garden, showy with lights and music, it seemed as if no sorrow could belong. Yet many were there who had been through the horror of five years

before. . . . As I watched I could not help a shiver. There was no reason why it should not come again and with no more warning—it is not a pleasant thing to think of.

I went round to the front of the hotel. The windows of the ballroom were open and the light streamed out across the grass. A green painted wooden fence with a border of crotons shut off the lane that ran down beside the ballroom. And over the fence hung a fringe of dusky faces peering obliquely with fascinated eyes at the scene. All the evening they hung there. Some were head and shoulders above, some hooked on with their chins, and some only showing a pair of rolling white eyes above their hands. Others there were who could have got little pleasure from anything but the imagination, for nothing but a pair of small tightly grasping black hands and the crown of a battered hat told of their presence. I think I shall see that picture to the end of my days: the sharp white light from the electric lamps, the flaming crotons, the green fence and the fascinated faces above, with the pathetic little hands that *had* no face; only a mute and battered brim that kept its place as unwaveringly as the tallest there. Perhaps those eyes squinted through the cracks in the fence and got something out of their vigil; or perhaps a taller than they stooped down and told of what was going on, but it seemed a mournful pleasure-taking; the little desperate hands that wanted to see so badly and that held on so patiently with so little hope of reward.

At eleven o'clock the dance was over. By half past most of the visitors had gone. We sat, a few of us, on the verandah till twelve o'clock and then I went up to my room. In the tropics one goes to bed always at the wrong time; the day is so hot and glaring; the nights are so wonderful.

A DAY IN MYRTLE BANK

From my window I looked out over the dark empty garden across to the sea. The lanterns were out; the stars burnt brilliantly in the velvet blackness of the night, and a faint breath, no more than a sigh, stirred in the palm trees. And the stars are looking down upon countless places as beautiful as this. It makes one feel again very young and very eager to know that. May the Lord not see fit to remove me from this lovely earth till I have seen the most of it.

OBSERVATIONS IN GENERAL





IN KINGSTON HARBOUR

[*To face page* 37.

VII

OBSERVATIONS IN GENERAL

KINGSTON lives in a dust-cloud. Every morning "The Doctor" comes along and sets it flying; and, not till evening can you stop screwing up your eyes. The Doctor is the wind that blows up from the sea as regularly as clockwork every day at the same time. It keeps the townspeople hearty and makes the visitors mad. From the windows of my bedroom I look across the lawns to the sea. If I get up early enough I can dress with my windows open, making the most of what air belongs to the stillness. The sea stretches like a sheet of silver blue silk from the foot of the gardens to the green boundaries of the Palisades beyond: the coconut trees that fringe the lawns are motionless. Voices of negro-boys idling on the old disused turtle-kraal sound across the distance as clearly as if they were under the window close by. One tries to throw the sash a fraction of an inch higher to get a fraction of an inch more air.

Then suddenly the palms begin to rustle and the voices are lost. There is a stir in the little muslin curtains beside the dressing-table; and before you can gather your wits together to think what you had best lay hold of first, everything is scattered and strewn about the floor. You close the windows for the rest of the day and dive down into corners and under tables till you

have swept up the chaff of your possessions, cursing apoplectically as you crawl out from under the bed or bump your head on a dressing-table knob. You might go down to the water's edge and get a lot of stones to weight your books and papers and table-covers, but that won't help you to do your hair in a tornado, or make your bottles stand upright. So you keep the windows closed and die for lack of air. Just before you die the evening comes and the wind is lost in the stillness again. Then you open your windows wide, draw down the blinds for those most intimate details of dressing, and, before you should, let up the blinds again and provide a short pantomime for the stragglers in the garden below. One learns quickly not to hamper oneself with many pruderies in a Turkish bath, whether it be of Leicester Square or the tropics.

In the streets the wind tears at your hat, whips the dust into your face and binds your skirts about your knees. Therefore everywhere you go you take a "bus," which for your deliberate undoing charges sixpence a mile. It sounds cheap, but it isn't cheap *because* it's so cheap. With a bus for sixpence, who would bother to struggle against the dust or walk in the heat for even twenty yards? Somewhere within the twenty yards you are sure to have to dodge off the pavement into the road because of an obstruction, and in that deviation there is nothing in the world to prevent a mule-cart coming round a corner and spitting you on its shafts, or a tram-car driving through the middle of your back. With things like that waiting to happen to you, twenty yards for sixpence is a ridiculous bargain. In such manner do the negro busman and the timorous traveller wax fat; the busman by his gain of lucre, the traveller by his lack of exercise. Still, diving under the bed is a worthy if not a happy substitute. That is never

denied you if you take a bedroom on the water-side at Myrtle Bank.

There is much charm about the Jamaican negro. It is true that he won't work if he doesn't want to; that teaching him doesn't necessarily mean he is going to learn anything; and that he will lie to you whenever his need for lying arises. But a parallel can be found for that among the white-skinned rulers that come across the Battersea Bridge to dominate your home in Chelsea. I have been lied to and neglected and browbeaten by my servants with a thoroughness quite equal to that with which the negro servant lies to and neglects or browbeats his masters in Jamaica—and not so prettily either. I don't mean to say that *all* my servants were thieves and shirkers and bullies; I only mean that in one's exasperation at being let down many times by a black people, one should not forget the capabilities of the white races along the same lines. In the bitter yearning for the motherly cook and the trim white-capped housemaid that frequent the advertising posters of model gas stoves and patent boilerettes one should remember out of justice to the copper-coloured islanders, the many cooks who get drunk, and the compact little army of housemaids who borrow your clothes and forget to give them back again.

The Jamaican does all that, but he moves quietly, is soft-voiced at his work, and generally dumb under correction. Among themselves they chatter ceaselessly like a lot of children. In Panama, where the industrial works of the canal and the United Fruit Company make such tremendous demands upon labour, the Barbadian and the Jamaican are chosen to the almost entire exclusion of the American negro. Only one man among all the employers with whom I talked preferred the

American. The others said he was insolent and impossible to manage; but that the Barbadians and Jamaicans, while they had to be coaxed and jollied along, responded to treatment and understood authority. So long as you had patience and did not storm at them or terrify them you could get a fair amount of work from them. On the other hand, the American is credited with the capacity for a love and a loyalty not allowed to the Jamaican. Stories of the earthquake do not quite bear this out; stories of nurses rushing into falling houses to look for their charges, of servants scaling toppling walls to find their masters. Yet at the same time there were things that told of a curious insensibility and apathy in the presence of pain. In Panama a man whose foot had been cut off by a passing train was left lying on the line till a white man came by and found him. The negroes had gone up to him, looked at him, and passed on, apparently quite indifferent. And I myself have seen them with a maniac raving beside them, as unconcerned as if it were a cow browsing.

They are not as musical as the American, but their speaking voices are lovely; soft, persuasive, childlike, and just a little wistful. Only when they speak so low that you cannot hear, or laugh the senseless, brainless cackle that is the peculiar property of negroes, do they get upon the nerves.

And their form of address is charming. "I bid you good-bye, mistress." "I beg you a car-fare," or "a quattie," or whatever the need of the moment may be. "I brain you" means "I outwit you." "Him favour tiger fe true," "he is very like a tiger." A woman took her baby to the doctor. "What is it?" asked the doctor. "Him ill, sah, him blowing bones." The doctor pondered a while. It was not for him to admit himself beaten at his own job, but he took a few

moments to work it out. "Blowing" was not far off "growing." What bones would a child of two be growing? Triumphant solution, "He is cutting his teeth."

* * * * * *

"Mistress, I take you for a row?" Bighead, whose other name (the one he prefers) is Sangwich, oared his boat softly through the moonlight alongside of the turtle-kraal where I was sitting watching the ships across the water. Bighead sells beads to unwary tourists in the daytime, and rows them about the harbour at night. I did not answer at first.

"Eugene and Cyril are with me, and we will sing to you, mistress," he urged.

I got into the boat and settled myself in the stern. The boys pulled out a little way and we drifted.

"Sing 'The Little Shirt my Mother made for Me,'" I commanded, and they sang crooningly, the light of the little lantern they held fitfully touching their dark faces.

"The Little Shirt" came to an end—it was longer than most little shirts usually are—and they went on to another song about a gentleman who tells what he would do if he were a millionaire, and to another, which, in a little homily, impresses upon any one who is going to take a girl from her home to "live with him in matrimonial form," the necessity for providing something as good as that which she has left. The repertoire depleted, the boys talked in a gentle undertone among themselves. Once Eugene's voice rose above the others. "Peace, hold your peace, Eugene," admonished Bighead, and there was silence for a moment.

Bighead brought the boat to the landing-place and got out to help me up the step.

"I bid you good-night, mistress," he said.

"Good-night, Sangwich; thank you all for singing to me," and "Good-night, mistress," "Good-night, mistress," came up from the boat after me as I went across the lawns in the moonlight to the hotel.

I would rather be white than black, but I recognise that we have not all the advantages. "Peace, hold your peace, Eugene," are better words for an admonishment on moonlit waters than "Stow your gab," or "Chuck it." Yet perhaps the latter suit the barrows best; *our* barrows anyhow.

ON STARCH, WORDS OF FOUR SYLLABLES, AND RELIGION, WITH A PARALLEL THROWN IN

VIII

ON STARCH, WORDS OF FOUR SYLLABLES, AND RELIGION, WITH A PARALLEL THROWN IN

THE three things that the Jamaican negro seems to love more than anything are starch, words of four syllables, and religion. Unless you send eternal and unremitting weekly pleadings, everything you wear is returned to you starched; and what is more, *raw* starched. My handkerchiefs are pieces of cardboard, my nightgowns are hair shirts, and my linen dresses are plaster casts. To insist upon getting your things unstarched is to have to take the chance of their being most indifferently laundered. I remember in my school-days there was a girl who used to wag her head when she repeated her poetry lesson. They told her not to. The result was that she ceased to be able to say her lesson with any facility at all. Directly she was allowed to wag her head again she became brilliant. I cannot suffer the starch because I must at least have a certain amount of sleep, so I have to put up with very mediocre ironing. I would like to have the starch monopoly for the West Indies if all the islands are like Jamaica.

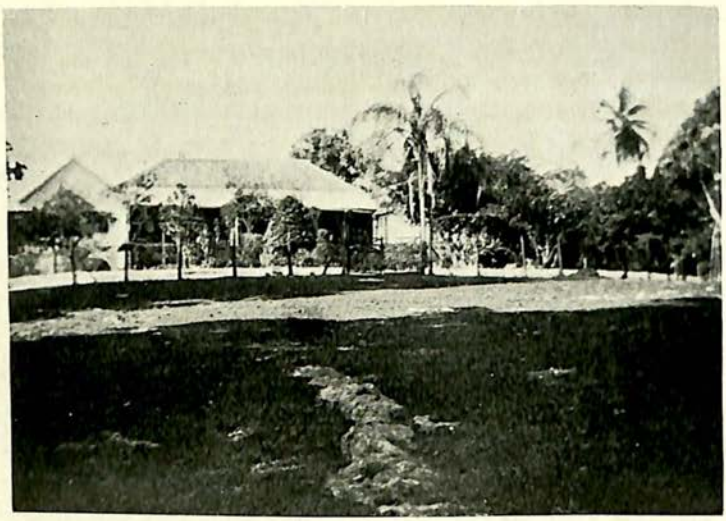
Long words are to them what beer is to the working classes in England. They don't drink excessively, but they must have their intoxication somehow. Long words, no matter what the meaning is, fill them with the spirit of their own greatness and warm them with the

wine of their seeming wisdom. If the man who has once borrowed your saucepan and burnt a hole in it, hurls the word " exemplification " at you, you certainly need something like *transmogrification* to reply with, or else he has got the better of you twice, and you have neither balm for your wounded feelings nor powder with which to lay him low. If you are going to preach the gospel at all the street corners, and that is a consummation evidently devoutly desired of coloured gentlemen, how are you going to bring sinners to the proper sense of their own unworthiness unless you have wordy bladders with which to buffet them to repentance? And who, oh, who could expect to score in a love contest unless he were thrice armed with the only weapon that can take the wind out of his antagonist's sails and leave breathless the adored one? In other countries it may be possible to woo in words of two or even one syllable, but if your love is a brown one I would be sorry for you if you tried, with *her*. She has been too well brought up to fall to poor trash like that.

If you want to know how to succeed I give you this for emulation. It was presented on the occasion of a wedding which took place a short time before I arrived.

" A Marriage Address.

" Having hearing that you are about to married gentleman of great renown, of the highest ephimerial in the clergy of appertaining to the Church, we the people living in district and residing in and peripathetically associated under the divine good and gracious God spiritually and mutually exasperated under a gratuitous liberation which devoted under a supernatural obligation, constrained by a heavenly desire to superstruct a good feeling of Christian loyalty. We beg to show our





A TYPICAL JAMAICAN PEN

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highest feeling of love and to thank you for the noblest example of Christian fecilitude under which manifestation of spontaneous exemplification the explanatory reasons has gone before will ever follow.

" The Star in Heaven will rise its way and gone forever before, but the key of Hell will lose its spell and never lock the door.

" Yes, madam, devoted as we are all under the refulgent rays of Heaven and putting our shoulders to the wheel of fortune and turn it wherever you like a glasual redundancy will always find a day of rest in all our hearts. Gratitude the noblest gift of mankind when faulty by which congratulatory evidence misapprehending all the virtues of life will ever facilitate these glorious recollections of which our blessed Lord and Saviour were crucified.

" Then again, madam, we have to thank you for your valuable service a Sunday school teacher from Sunday to Sunday, and when the noonday arrive all during the week we feel how hard working you is that God in His fulsome of His heart will always congratulate you to His lives end.

" We people love and admire you and your dear tender husband wishing you long life and happiness and the love of the rose in so sweet a garden to swell and rise as Christ love His Church.

" We remain, Madam,

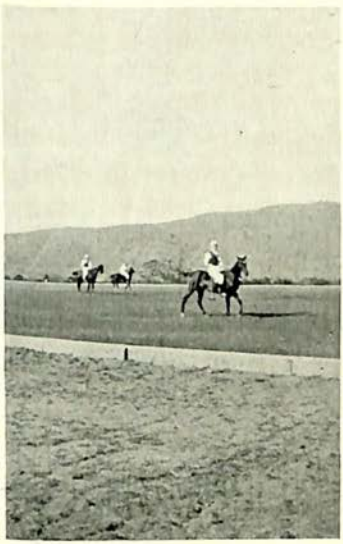
" Your loving and affectionate friends."

Better that, and the laurels are yours.

I listened many times to the street preachers. I wanted to find out the secret of their extraordinary staying power. With hands clasped and head uplifted they pour their inexhaustible torrent into the ears of the assembled crowd as uninterruptedly as if it were

being produced by the turning of a handle at the back of them. Every now and then a voice in the crowd responds, repeating perhaps the last words of a sentence. It has the same effect that a stick poked into a good fire would have. The recipe seems to be a thorough and inherent knowledge of the Scriptures, and a good wind. There is no home-made eloquence about it; it is simply stringing beads with an instinct for matching the colours. A praying if you are well accoutred can go on eternally along these lines—

"O Lord, we are gathered together here to-night for the purpose of worshipping Thee. We are aware that Thou hast said, 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there will I be also.' We *do* worship Thee, Lord." ("We do, Lord, we do.") "We worship Thee in Spirit and in Truth. Come down among us and make Thyself our Guest. Take possession of our hearts and drive out the demon of sin that lives within us. Thou knowest, Lord, how we are beset on every side by sin and the devil, but there is a fountain filled with blood that will cleanse us. Plunge us, Lord, plunge us with Thy strong right arm deep into the cleansing blood of the Lamb, and we shall emerge from that fountain whiter than snow, Thou knowest also, gracious Lord, how we, in spite of all our sin and wickedness, do hunger and thirst after righteousness, and Thou hast promised us that we shall be filled. Fill us, Lord, fill us here now. Ho! every one that thirsteth, let him drink of the waters that are freely given. *We* thirst, Lord, *we* would drink of the precious waters of Thy Holy Spirit. Pour them out upon us, Lord; we are waiting." (Groans, and "Lord, we are waiting.") "Come now, Lord, come and save us from the power of sin and the devil and hell. We know not how long we may have to live. Even now this moment Thou mayest call one of us. And





1, 2. POLO AT UP PARK CAMP, JAMAICA





3. BAND SERGEANT 2ND WEST INDIA REGIMENT
4. REGIMENTAL PET OF 2ND WEST INDIA REGIMENT (AN AFRICAN SHEEP)

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how many are ready ?" (More groans and a woman jerking her body into a frenzied dislocation.) "Not one, Lord, not one is ready to enter into Thy Presence. Thou hast offered us the garment of salvation. Teach us how to put it on, that we may be dressed ready to receive Thee. O God, our help in ages past, be Thou our help now ! Do not pass us by, or we perish eternally. *Now* is the appointed time, *now* we must lay hold of salvation lest we never have the opportunity again. God, pity Thy children; Lord, save Thy people——"

And so on and so on for as long as you can keep it up. A verse from the Scriptures, a biblical allusion, a line of a hymn, a catch phrase, and the knack of putting them all together; so your "ark of salvation" is made. But you must have a fair wind to blow it along. The negro preacher has more than a fair wind.

Looking back upon the days of a childhood terrorized by a Methodist emotionalism, I can see no difference between the white local preacher and his black equivalent. There was the same agonized pounding at the door of Heaven, the same terrified barter of this world for the next, the same frantic rush for shares in an estate that none had ever seen. It was not so much a question of teaching one to live this life truly, courageously, fully, that one might be of use in it by one's intelligence instead of, or as well as by, one's emotions. "Now is the appointed time" did not mean to them the appointed time to live and to learn and to know; it meant the appointed time to fling yourself upon your knees and offer a sterilized existence in this world for a front seat in the world to come. "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good," meant "Prove them as I say, hold fast to what I tell you." If you had taken that text at its real value and gone out sincerely to prove; if you

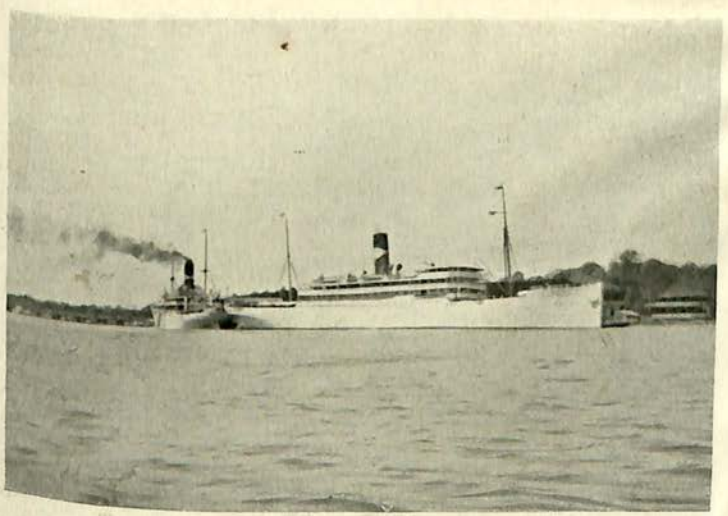
had come back and said, "That which is truth to you is not truth to me, and that which is good to you is not good to me," you would have been mourned for as a backslider and prayed over either publicly or in secret, and probably both. There was only one proving, that Christ was the Son of God: only one good, that belief in his legitimacy meant certain salvation. And salvation was a front seat. Once I remember feeling that the very foundations of heaven and hell were at stake when an elder brother, who up to that moment had been one of the bulwarks of an unshakable piety, put the terrible question to the minister, "Was it permissible that a man when he was very tired should say his prayers in bed?" It seemed to me as if all the angels of the spheres must have stopped their singing on the same note to hold their breath for the answer. Not that the question in itself was so dreadful. Coming from an outsider it would have seemed almost a happy one. That he thought of saying his prayers at all proved that the gates had not yet eternally closed upon him. But that one of the actual doorkeepers in the House of the Lord should have put it——! The reply of the minister was for ever lost to me in the enormity of the question. A quarter of a century afterwards the ghost of an old stupefaction rises in a pale thrill and walks a pace before it dies again; one of the unending vibrations caused by the revolutionaries of the world.

The search for parallels is one of the most interesting searches that there is. The insistence of the Christian scientist of to-day is nothing but the thrumming of the African's tom-tom that has come down through the ages. The savage out of his instinct made a noise that would gather people together. There was nothing fitful or changeful about it; it was concentration upon one note. It called, called, called. Very much later the

scientist discovered it and gave it a name. And still later the Christian scientist stole it from the scientist and called it his own invention. There is nothing successful that it does not enter into. "Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy," says the revivalist often enough, and one by one the converts stagger up to the Penitent Form. "Lu, la-lu, la-lu la-lu, la lu-u," sings the nurse, and the babies' heads begin to nod. The value of it has been appreciated equally by the horse-leech's daughter when she cried, "Give, give," the importunate widow who wearied the judge with her much pleading, and the Chinese torturer with his periodic drop of water on the victim's head. Truly there is nothing new under the sun.



WAITING FOR THE BANANA TRAIN, ALMIRANTE



TWO UNITED FRUIT COMPANY'S STEAMERS LOADING AT ALMIRANTE WHARF

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A BURGLARY

IX

A BURGLARY

I HAVE helped in a burglary. The other morning as I sat in the verandah rocking, and reading my letters, a man came up to me; his motor was standing at the entrance.

"Would you like a drive?" he asked.

I looked at the motor. The door stood open, the cushions held out arms, the brass blinked a hundred welcomes. But I had an appointment.

"Some one is coming at ten-thirty," I said sorrowfully.

"Let him wait," said the man with the motor, masterfully. "I'll have you back by eleven."

I looked at the clock; it wanted three minutes to ten: it would hurt no one to rock his impatience to rest for half-an-hour on that broad cool verandah. I pinned my hat on tighter, pulled the chiffon over my face, the door closed upon us, and we jerked off. For some little distance as we drove through the town nothing was said. I never want to talk either motoring or dancing, it is quite pleasure enough to be moving quickly. But I could not help wondering why the man had asked me, and asked me eagerly. I have an instinct for those who want me for myself and those who have an ulterior motive. As I stepped into the car I had no illusions. There might be occasions on which I

scored by the irresistible attraction of a fascinating personality, but this was not one of them. I was a means to an end, and I knew it. On this occasion it added to the interest of things *to* know it.

"I am going to take you to Hope Gardens," said the man at last.

I nodded. It was a good place to go to on a Sunday morning. When we got clear of the dust of the town the air freshened. We sped through the little village of Cross Roads up the road towards Constant Spring, and turned off at Half-Way Tree by the Hope Road to Hope Gardens, which lay at the far end of it. The bells were calling people to church, and slowly and decorously came groups of black and coloured worshippers on their way to the great event of the week; the men in fine-looking suits of cloth or linen and carrying always the umbrella—the blue ribbon of Sabbatical respectability; the women and children befrilled and bestarched till they rustled like palms in a high wind, and decked out sometimes in white, but for the most in the fearful aniline pink which shows blue shadows in the folds. They came out of their little houses and shanties, behind the dildoe hedges, where they sleep *over* the bed and *under* the bed and as near to the bed as they can get; as trim and clean and tidy as if each woman had a suite of apartments and a maid for her own private use, instead of living eight and ten in a room. Flowery hats, of exceeding hideousness but trim and faultlessly neat, set on black wool tortured into imposing puffs and rolls and bulges; beads round the neck, bangles on the wrist and earrings hanging from under the wool frizzes. And eternally and inevitably, transparent lace blouses, through the open work of which gleam their chocolate graces like a fine brown scroll-work. So they march in ones and twos and threes portentously, majestically, to

the little church with jalousied windows from whose wooden tower the bell is clanging; their tongues not yet loosened by the working of the spirit and the playing of the harmonium; their minds still under the hypnotic influence of clean clothes, starch and Sunday morning.

House-rent in Jamaica is high, yet next to an expensive bungalow on a fine road you will see ragged little palm-thatched shacks, or what is not even picturesque, a two-roomed wooden shanty, round which a cur dog, a handful of dusty chickens and a pig or two wander languidly. One looks in London to find a Shepherd's Market under the wing of a Curzon Street, but here it seems odd, not so much perhaps that they have occurred, but that they still go on happening. From little shanties such as these the people came, and as we passed them we passed also wide-verandahed bungalows, set in lawns shaded with coconut palms and spreading mango trees, and screened with green draperies of coralilla or flaming magenta bougainvillea.

A little way along the Hope Road the man spoke again. This time he revealed himself.

"I am going to the Gardens for a purpose," he said.

"I know you are," I answered. He did not come out of his trance to be surprised.

"I am going," he said mechanically, "to steal an orchid." Then he relapsed into silence.

We passed a carriage in which sat a gentleman with a white beard.

"That," said the man, rousing himself again, "is the bishop."

I kept my temper. It is hard to be shown a bishop when your mind is turned to a burglary.

Later on he seemed to grow more tense. He spoke, but as if to himself.

" I would not steal it if they would let me buy it, but they will not let me buy it. And I must have it," he added fiercely. We were evidently getting near the gardens.

At last we swirled round through an open gate into a drive, on either side of which were at intervals many boards of directions. We pulled up under a big tree near a summer-house. The engines stopped. There was silence all round. From the little fern gully beside us came a cool sound of trickling water. Overhead a bird twittered; and out from the shade in which we sat streamed a long sunlit path flanked on either side with rose-bushes. No one else in the gardens, not a soul to interfere, and the possibility of an attendant cropping up at any sinful moment. The man got out of the car slowly and stood a moment beside it.

" Shall I wait for you till you come back ? " I asked thoughtfully.

" No, you must come with me."

He looked as if he were getting ready to tear me out if I showed the least sign of refusal, and I dismounted philosophically. There came a look on his face such as I have seen on the face of a baby at that moment when it knows for certain that its mother isn't *really* going out of the room. A negro boy softly slipped up out of the ground under our feet and stood waiting before us.

" Gather me," said the man to him, " a big bunch of roses, the best you've got." One may buy roses. And to me—" Come and let me show you the copper-coloured bougainvilleas."

We walked silently up the main path, and turning down a side one came upon a magnificent pergola a blaze of burnished coppery pink.

"This," began the man again, with his back turned to the bougainvilleas and his eye skimming the map in another direction, "is the finest pergola of copper-coloured bougainvilleas to be seen anywhere in—— I think it's over that way; come on."

Along one path, down another, twisting and turning, at last we pulled up at a glass house. Not a human being was in sight. The door was open. There stood the orchids, flaunting their waxen beauties and flinging an unspoken challenge to the longing craven at the entrance. We crept up like a pair of criminals. As the man hesitated, cursing exhaustively in his mind the creature who was responsible for all orchid houses with a door at the front and another at the rear, one radiant thing more beautiful than all the others caught his eye and held it.

"Be a man and run away with me," whispered the hussy, leaning towards him just enough to take his almost fleeted senses from him.

The garden held its breath; the man moved forward, two hypnotized eyes fixed upon the temptress. He had come to ravish, and he was being ravished. In that moment the air was so charged it seemed as if all the watch-dogs of the garden must leave their posts and come running to the orchid house without waiting to question why they ran.

But no one came. Behind us at the end of the narrow tiled way between the rows of pots, the door stood open and the sunlight streamed in. We looked first to the shut door before us and then to the sun-barred one behind us. Instinctively I closed up round the thief to give him cover. His hand went to his pocket; there was the click of an opened knife, a tiny snapping sound, and the beauty lay in the outside pocket of a silk shirt against a thumping heart and

under the impenetrable folds of a secretive and uncommunicative Norfolk jacket.

When one is running from justice one must learn to walk slowly. To the motor we went formally, proudly, as one has seen roosters stepping round the yard for the delectation of their women-folk, or caparisoned circus horses footing it in the ring. If you want to know what real anguish is, walk like that after you have committed a crime and your guilty heart-beats are counterfeiting a battalion of footfalls two inches and a half from your own unhappy heels.

We reeled in at opposite sides of the motor and met on the seat of the car. For a while we lay back without speaking. A rest cure was no luxury but a throbbing necessity after what had happened. Then we sat up and looked at each other.

"Ah!" he said slowly and fraughtly, wiping the terror beads off his brow.

On the way home and well out of the danger zone he grew light-headed. He had transferred the orchid to me. I carried it under a screen of roses. He kept on singing snatches of foolish song and peering under the roses ecstatically. Then he would jam his hat on his head, stiffen up at the wheel, and we would go bucketing over the road, taking the crossings like a lot of three-foot hurdles. I got at last to know that if I didn't try to save myself I could be pretty sure of alighting on about the same spot on the cushion every time, and I gave up worrying. But I went and lay down that afternoon from two till five. In the matter of nerves it is just as well to bank a shilling for every twelve pence one draws out.

For that adventure my share was the roses. Two nights later I dined at King's House. Some one asked me if I had been to Hope Gardens, and I told the story

of the orchid. The man on my left was tremendously interested.

" Whom did you say you went with ? " he asked.

I turned and smiled benignly on him. One is always grateful for a good listener.

" I didn't say," I replied.

After dinner a resplendent creature in a scarlet coat and spurs was putting the sugar in my coffee for me.

" Who was it sitting on my left at dinner ? " I asked.

" The Curator of Hope Gardens," he said. " Two lumps or three ? "

A PORTRAIT

X

A PORTRAIT

KITTY and I met by chance in the hall of Myrtle Bank through the introduction of the Lord High Executioner, to whom Kitty was just that moment definitely pledged. Her mother I knew, but as we chiefly met at dinner-parties, and Kitty was in bed by dark, there had been till then no encounter. The Lord High Executioner being about to set off for London on a holiday, he and Kitty were having their last spree together. They had lunched at the hotel, been out for a drive, arrived back for tea, and at the moment of our meeting were deciding that the time had come for parting. I, on my way home, had also stopped for tea, and was busy drinking it in a dark corner when they appeared.

"This," said the Lord High Executioner, "is Kitty."

I bowed, and Kitty bowed; then we waited.

Perceiving a hitch he went on: "We are just engaged," he explained.

"I hope you will be happy," I said, "but that does not give me her second name."

He looked surprised.

"You are going to Kitty's mother's house to dinner to-night," he said.

Whereupon Kitty and I embraced—as much as two ladies of much natural reserve and a certain amount of

schooling with regard to emotions would be likely to embrace in the public hall of a public-house.

The Lord High Executioner and I wasted twenty precious minutes of her time in a discussion upon a future state, and during that discussion, which rightfully must have tried her patience hard, she sat courteously waiting till it should end. Fear of missing the tram-car cut it short in its glory. I left reluctantly. The Lord High Executioner followed me after a moment alone with Kitty on the verandah.

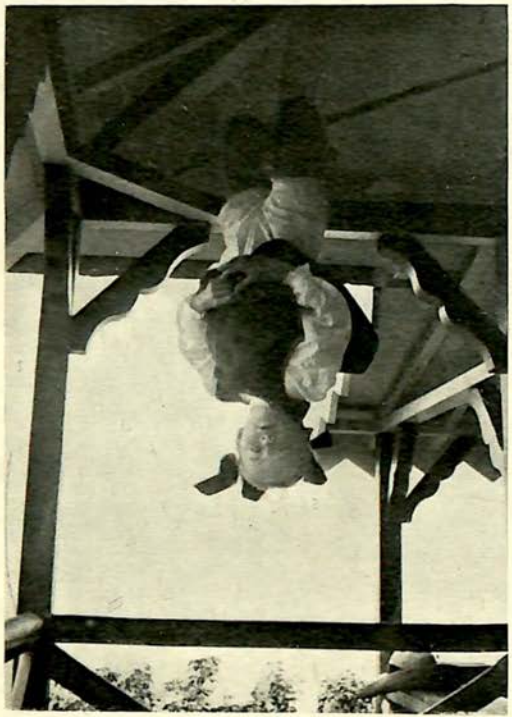
"She says," he reported, "'Isn't she nice!'"

I mounted the tram and gave the ticket-collector the tail-end of the smile that was Kitty's by right. At dinner that night her mother fastened on the chains that Kitty had forged. She said, "Kitty has been describing you to me. 'I thought,' said Kitty, 'that she was a Mrs., and she's a nice young Miss.'"

Do you wonder that, apart from her own valuable personality, she got me?

We met next at the Governor's house in the hills. During the week-end she did three very difficult things with a most extraordinary grace. She went to bed early without a murmur, swung from the verandah bars as if she had been born on a cocoanut tree in the jungle, and engaged a very preoccupied Excellency to walk with her before breakfast. To possess the combined talents of a stoic, a trapeze artist and an innocent Delilah is to command all the respect that an intelligent incapable has to give. All mine and more was Kitty's then.

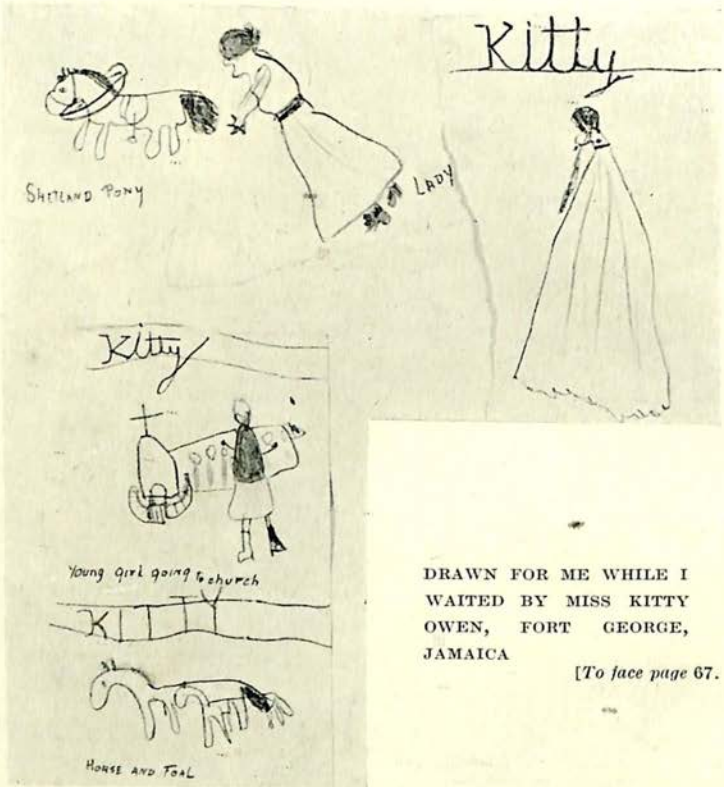
She went up with Tina after breakfast to help her make the bed, and Tina's black face came down smiling. I was invited to visit the room when it was "done," and with a woman's instinct for the things that would delight another woman, she brought out her jewel-





KITTY AT EASE

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DRAWN FOR ME WHILE I WAITED BY MISS KITTY OWEN, FORT GEORGE, JAMAICA

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case, a japanned box about four inches by five by one, from which the catch had departed. It held a little gold wire bangle hung with red beans, a string of pink coral, two bead rings, a lead mummy and some Jamaican charms tenderly presented as parting gifts from the Lord High Executioner. Each jewel was accompanied by a much-worn tuft of cotton wool gone grey in the service. Kitty displayed the ornaments one by one that none of their separate beauties should be lost, and when they had been hung over long enough, put them back with their little cotton-wool beards and closed the box reverently; then she went down on to the verandah and swung on the roof-bars till the bell rang for lunch. One of the decent things about Kitty is that while she can do with an audience as well as most people, yet her sincere pleasure is in the tricks for their own sake. All the delights of an unredeemed monkey are hers as she trapezes.

That morning the limelight left her and her gyrations early, and was switched by a devoted Democrat on to American politics, but Kitty went on qualifying for a cracked skull as happily as if she were doing it to crowded houses. You might, if you were so foolish, forsake the pleasures of the body for addle-pated talk, but your stupidity was not potent enough to dim *her* ecstasies. For you, if you wished, to crawl face downwards over a newspaper, and talk about it afterwards; but for her a happy ignorance of men's infamies and the blissful soaring cross-bars. From such heights one could afford to be indifferent and even compassionate. I know that into Kitty's courteous little mind there stole a shaft of pity for us with our feet upon the floor and our joyless bodies right side up.

In the early afternoon she begged a piece of paper and sat down to draw. She made a laborious study of a

Dutch goose, a " Rhinostrich," and a Young Girl Going to Church; then she grew ambitious and started a procession of all the animals on their way to the ark, but gave up at the guinea-pig because of having started the elephant too small. Tea arrived, shelving momentary difficulties, and after tea the motor came round and took us off into the hills till dusk. Kitty, squeezed like a velvet-eyed mouse between her mother and the Governor, sat quiet, but watchful and intent. There is not much outside of books that escapes her wise little understanding.

We separated next morning, looking forward to a speedy re-union; I to go to Haiti and Kitty to their hut in the hills at Newcastle. When I got back from Haiti I was to join them there, Kitty having placed the Scabin at my disposal. The hut has only two rooms; so a small piece of the verandah just big enough in which to put an infinitesimal bed, has been cut off and called Kitty's cabin. The Scabin, said Kitty generously, was mine if I would use it. Indeed I would use it very gladly. We shook hands upon it and went our different ways.

A WEEK-END AT NEWCASTLE

XI

A WEEK-END AT NEWCASTLE

WHEN I got back from Haiti I went to Newcastle. From the plains Newcastle looks no more than a handful of boxes flung there by a giant and left to slip at will down the buttressed ridge of the mountain. At close quarters it is a comfortable regimental hill-station made up of a cluster of capacious red-roofed bungalows called huts, and barracks for 400 Tommies. Six miles to Papine from Kingston and the sea, and three miles on from there, brings you to Gordon Town, the gateway of the hills. From there you begin to twist and turn and crawl the thirteen miles of driving road that carries you up the next 3000 feet to Newcastle. If you ride you can do it in five miles along a bridle-path. I cannot ride, so I had to take a buggy—or a "bus," as I always forget to call it. Bus hire is expensive in Jamaica. Now there are three things which give me a sharp sense of discomfort. They are wilful waste, small economies and debt. Wilful waste is squalid and untidy; it discovers a lack of brains, and somehow or other it makes me think of people who slobber. Small economies tend towards an undue consideration of things which should be inconsiderable; they throw out the perspective and they breed convulsive extravagances as an aftermath. Never yet have I saved a penny on a bus fare in London that a taxi has not been the inevitable and immediate result.

The explanation is simple. The effort required to save the penny I have in my pocket is far greater than the effort required to pass a string of pearls in Bond Street. I want the pearls much more than I want the bus ride, but one is possible and the other isn't—just yet. As it is a meagre world in which virtue is expected to be its own reward, I look for another more comforting, and find it in the taxicab. Divide a bus fare by a taxicab and it will not leave much over, but that is not the sum. Multiply the bus fare you would not allow yourself by the string of pearls you can't have, then divide by the taxicab you do take, and you will see how humble is the solace with which you have provided yourself. But it leaves you on the other side when the pass-book is made up, and that brings one to the subject of debt.

On this matter I have no narrow and restricted conventions, except so far as butchers and bakers and candlestick-makers are concerned. The world has not yet given me the half of what It owes me. I don't want money, I only want the things that money can buy, and so I want no end of money. So far It doesn't know what It does owe me, and I, not yet being quite sure myself, am willing to wait a little longer till Its vision is more clear. But that It owes me much is very clear to me; and if instead of squeezing my hand and saying, "You're a dear," and moving away to leave me to pay the taxi, It were to come in the manner of the angels in the Hymnal, "casting down their golden crowns," I would not feel It was doing no more than It ought, I would think It was doing just as It should, and I would pick up the golden crowns and put them in the bank so that I could spend them on knowing It better, not forgetting to go on singing to It in-between-whiles and loving It with all my heart, and with all my soul, and with all my body. If you sing to a world in a fairly nice voice

and love it with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your body, you are doing a lot more for It than It knows, and you have every right to Its golden crowns. It has squeezed my hand oftener than It has cast down Its golden crowns, and that is why I am six months later still suffering a disfigurement that only the slow process of time will be able to remove.

And inasmuch as butchers and bakers and candlestick-makers are concerned, that is a question of kingship. You are willing that a world should owe you; you are able to contract good-sized responsibilities with people who have much, knowing it will not hurt them to take their five or ten per cent. and wait; but with the music of a lost kingdom still echoing in your ears and lifting your head you can't pass the cheesemonger without suffering if his eye says, "Ain't pide 'er larst month yet." I will accept pain from a world but not from a cheesemonger.

All this is quite relevant. It explains later a small economy practised at an infinite expense, and takes me further on the road to Newcastle.

Winding, twisting, turning, we made our way up the mountain. As we rose we left the heat behind. The quietness of the hills enfolded us. We passed neat little thatched huts half hidden in a paradise of cane, bamboo, cocoanut and mango, and gay with scarlet hibiscus.

All through the tangle of greens waved the tattered pennants of the banana plant, with its strange, drooping crimson bud that looks for all the world like a modern electric light fixture. Sometimes we would pass a native padding softly along barefooted in the dust. It was always "Good-day to you, mistress," graciously. Sometimes a little sand-coloured cur, beloved of the pickneys, would rush out and bark at the horses, and black eyes would peer through the pickets of the gate wistfully. There is an extraordinary wistfulness in the

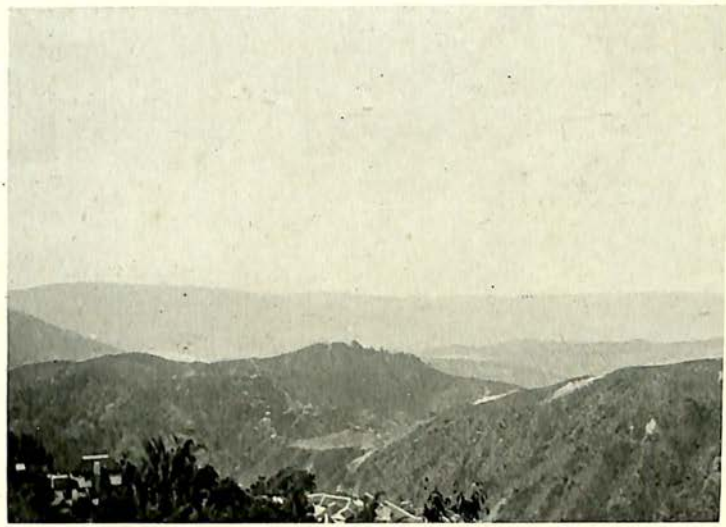
face of the black baby. The child of six or eight is gay and brilliant, but the baby of two has a haunting melancholy that disturbs, and sets one longing. To wave your hand or blow a kiss will make a slow smile come into the little black face, but the wistfulness is always there behind the eyes.

We came upon some women washing clothes at a pool in the rocks; and again, as we passed, a group of little things came out from the trees and offered flowers with "Good drive to you, mistress." And once, rounding an elbow too quickly, the driver stopped his horses with a jerk that broke the trace and held us up till it was repaired. But it prevented a mule-cart, driving three abreast, stepping into the middle of us, which was something saved.

At last, after slow striving, we came upon the camp. The driver pulled up at a wall, over which I could see the soldiers playing fives or rackets or tennis or something with nets. Kitty's mother detached herself from the watchers, and came towards me. We walked slowly and speechlessly—it is the only way to arrive at all—the rest of the way to the hut that seemed to be hung in the sky above us, and, a little while later, thirteen miles by road and five by bridle-path from the tropics, I drank my tea in an English spring, looking out over an English rose-garden.

That night there was to be a great theatrical performance. Kitty, who had been sent to bed in the afternoon to prepare for it, put her head out of the Scabin as we arrived on the verandah.

"How do you do," said she politely, and with great pleasure at meeting again we shook hands and spoke the little generalities common to a conversation between two women of the world after a slight separation.



FOUR THOUSAND FEET ABOVE KINGSTON



A ROADSIDE LAUNDRY ON THE WAY TO NEWCASTLE

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REGIMENTAL HUTS, NEWCASTLE, JAMAICA



ROSES ON THE MOUNTAIN TOPS

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We passed on, to the tea-table, while Kitty made a hasty toilet and rejoined us, sleeker about the head than she had looked a few minutes before.

It had been decided at the last moment that the Scabin on closer consideration would be inadequate, and a room had been borrowed for me in an adjacent hut. When I saw the Scabin I was not sorry. Kitty did the honours of it pridefully. As I looked around I discovered more fully Kitty's estimate of me, and I also was proud. At our first meeting she had failed to recognize my extreme age; at this she saw me no larger than herself, which proved that in her mind we met as equals. Nothing could be more fitting than the unconsciousness of it all.

This was the Scabin. A bed, which would no more than hold Kitty comfortably, about filled it. A dressing-table no bigger than the palm of your hand, with toilet accessories built to scale, tucked itself into one corner obligingly to give room for you to squeeze between it and the bed; and for the rest, as you stood you pressed close to the bed in order not to scrape the decorations off the opposite wall. That is, of course, if you were as big as you are and not as big as Kitty thought you. Those of her own build could move more freely.

On a shelf at the head of the bed sat a glass rabbit and a picture of a youthful Bacchus, whose other name was Little-Brother-Without-Any-Clothes-On; while on the wall by the foot hung—oh, adorable sight!—Kitty's doll's kimono on a coat-hanger made by Kitty from a curved twig and a loop of worsted. The tiny shoulders stood out at just the right angle, the little sedate folds of the skirt hung primly. . . . I *know* that doll would never marry; she would be an old maid to the end of her days.

At dinner that night Kitty faced me, a straight, spare little figure with an enormous bow on the top of her sleek flax.

"This is only the second time in my life that I have sat up to late dinner," she said modestly.

There is nothing pushing about Kitty.

Later on, during the removal of the fish, she renewed her entertainment of me.

"Do you like Newcastle?" she asked kindly.

"I haven't seen much of it yet," I answered, "but I like very much what I *have* seen of it."

She nodded. "You'll like it better when you get accustomed to it," she replied.

"Shut up, Kitty," said her father, "you've talked enough;" and Kitty shut up in no way resentfully. It was just her father's way of stopping the clock: they were very good friends.

After dinner we all walked down to the theatre, gathering in numbers as we passed each hut. When we arrived the hall was crammed with Tommies. Kitty and I were led to a front seat and deposited there: Kitty's mother went off to her duties behind the scenes; and Kitty having found a friend, I was left free to look around me.

One of the most cheerful things in an at times not too cheerful world is its unflagging earnestness in the doing of trivial things. I suppose that is the balance that keeps a tragedy-ridden universe comparatively sane. If you can come down to a common room where one person is clattering the tea-cups and another is making toast at the fire, the ghost of the attic leaves you at the door; or, if it has the bad taste to follow you in, it becomes a fairly impotent thing for the time being. So do we screen our eyes from falling dynasties with



KITTY'S FAMILY



EARLY MORNING MARKETING IN THE HILLS, NEWCASTLE

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trifles of mother-o'-pearl and satin. But dynasties will fall; and after all a fan is a pretty thing.

The combined emotions of the two or three hundred under that roof must have made a fine essence for analysis in the Laboratory of Spiritual Chemics. I can imagine the acrid, pungent vapours that went clashing up to the noses of the Fates in a spiral fume. Admiration, Fear, Love, Envy, Ambition, Pride—the whole stock-pot of human sensation. In a fanatical desire for realism and an original and unselfish conception of the part, the Major had that day shaved the few remaining hairs from the top of his head that he might play the *roué* with more intense conviction. Spell-bound with wonder and admiration the khaki-coloured audience held their breath while Corporal B—— prowled round the stage tapping the calico walls with a jemmy and hurling the words of a burglarious song at them in a hoarse and sinister undertone. It was his seventeenth performance of the same thing, but the emotions that went to acclaim it were as fresh as the day they were born.

And the gamut run in "A Pair of Lunatics"! The real and dreadful terror that lay behind the simulated terror of the lady lunatic who was in stage fear of the gentleman lunatic, but in a much more deadly fear of herself. The agonized film that covered her eyes afresh with each unavailing attempt to grasp the life-line thrown out to her by a prompter, who was only successful in making himself heard by each and every member of the audience. The heroism of the he-lunatic as with ice at his heart and a frozen smile upon his lips he seized upon the cue that had not been given him and tossed an unintelligible sentence to a hard-working but still baffled stalls and gallery. The ineffable joy and almost

swoon of delight of the performers following a consecutive two minutes of parry and thrust correctly made !

And Kitty crouching a little in her chair; motionless, with eyes fixed upon the magic scene before her. One clenched hand is nursed in the hollow of the other, uplifted a little and still, as if interest had for the while suspended life. The small, soft face is like a piece of carved ivory, the eyes two dark, shining pools. Not for *her* to carp at methods or kill her joy with scoffing barbs. The burglar prowls, and with thought of her own safe home Kitty's heart stands still. The lunatics gibber un-understandable things at each other, and she is mystified, but even though she cannot comprehend, she sees Captain and Mrs. Blank in a new and surprising light and is thrilled. And this lovely, sad, sweet, gray-haired woman, for whom the tropic-stricken piano always tinkles into melancholy murmurings when she takes or leaves the stage : this willowy lady of middle age with a girl's eyes and an angelic presence that somehow always brings blessings to the good and makes new creatures out of the bad—the clenched hand stirs in the hollowed palm and Kitty takes a little breath—oh, it's Mother, after all !

To be at morning in the heat and languor of the tropics, and at night under blankets listening to the patter of the rain upon the roof, and drawing one's blankets closer for the sake of warmth, seems odd.

To-night I am sitting on the verandah of the little red-roofed bungalow among the clouds, looking down from 4000 feet on to the plain where I was gasping yesterday in the heat. Only a rose-garden lies between the bungalow and the edge of the world. Twenty feet away from the verandah the mountain-side drops sheer into a ravine. From the verandah one looks over the rose-

garden across the valley and down on to the plain below. The city is asleep, and the lights of the town trail away to a single string of jewels that loses itself under a distant range of hills. It is the road to Constant Spring. Beyond the plain the waters of the harbour lie like a silver mist. The two lights of Port Royal and Fort Augusta gleam faintly. A little way from the shore the *Melpomone* is flashing a signal.

It is hot down there upon the plain. The white dust has been swirling along the roads, and the sun has been beating all day upon the tired earth. There, it is weariness and anxious thoughts of men.

But up here, folded away in the dark, cool hills, it seems as if no anxiety could come near. The little bungalow with its lighted lamp shedding a comforting human glow out into the night; the dim, moonlit rose-garden glinting with fireflies; and the stars looking down serenely over all—it is like seeing the Infinite from a nurse's arms.

I have engaged Kitty to come with me to Peter Pan next Christmas when she follows her father to Woolwich. If she forgets and gives her initiation into the hands of another, I will ban her with terrible bans. I will place upon her unhappy flax the Frightful Excommunication of the First Decade. It is called The Schoolgirl's Curse, or I'll-Never-Speak-to-You-Again; and it goes on and on and on through unending cycles to The Very Next Time.

Kitty little knows.

ABOUT ANOTHER OF US

XII

ABOUT ANOTHER OF US

ONE morning while I was staying at Constant Spring, and before I went to Newcastle, the following letter came up on my breakfast tray.

DEAR MADAM,

The authoress of the little book *Male and Female* (which has come to your hands recently through Dr. M——) would like to have a little confidential chat with the authoress of *Letters to my Son* on subjects important to thinkers.

Come to see me, please, at the above address (an earthquake-damaged residence with no front gate, but a side gate big enough for any one to enter) between the hours of 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. (for I do not keep a lamp), or write me when I can come to your lodgings and see you. But in either case I would like to see you *alone.*

Hoping that you will oblige me before Friday evening,

I am sincerely,

THE MULBERRY TREE

I know the little book. It was called—

MALE AND FEMALE

THE ORIGIN OF HE AND SHE

AND THEIR

COURSE TO SUPREMACY

BASED ON

FACTS AND OBSERVATION

WITH A SPRINKLE OF IMAGINATION

BY

A HATMAKER

IN

JAMAICA

Of the lady who wrote it I had heard very often. On account of her eccentricity she had at one time been under control. Released from that control she had entered some almshouses, but not liking it she had found her way back to a ruined house near the asylum, and, having begged permission to occupy it until it should be pulled down, was living there contentedly, making her hats and thinking her thoughts on evolution.

Her determination to set the world right made her devote the whole of her hard-earned savings to the spreading of her ideas; and the little green pamphlet with its elaborately gilded lettering on the cover was published at her own expense. For twenty-three pages she explains the riddle of the universe, and finishes the explanation with a charmingly naive sigh of satisfaction.

> "So far, so good—the mystery is finished,
> And the glory of God thereby not diminished."

I wrote a note saying I would call next morning, and gave it to the boy to post. Then I got out the little book and tried it again. It was true she had the reputation of being paranoic, but also on certain counts I knew myself to be intensely stupid. Never had I been able to play a game of cards other than Old Maid or Beggar-my-neighbour; and after six months' forcible feeding on the first proposition in Euclid I was given full permission to strike that diet for ever off my mathematical menu. It was useless, said a maddened and desperate master of his art, to attempt to restore animation in that which was obviously non-existent. Certain brain cells ordinarily found in the most elementary of God's creatures were entirely missing in this instance, and it would be unfair to those who were developed along the more normal lines to hold them up any longer for the sake of one whose intelligence was not merely atrophied, but which had never seen birth at all. "Ladies, we will return to the lesson." He wiped the foam off his lips and set the blackboard tremblingly.

Remembrances of that nature always stay my judgment when I am inclined to dub another illogical or valueless. There is always the chance that they are above my understanding. I plodded on with the book, but the only sensation I got out of it was that I was trying to learn a lesson in the middle of a pillow fight. When my ears began to sing I gave it up.

The busman drove me to a gate in a high wall. I got down and stood for a moment looking for the bell.

"Push the gate open, mistress," said the driver, and I pushed it open and walked in.

The gate I had gone to was the one mentioned in the letter, "the side gate big enough for any one to enter." It opened into a yard at the back of the house. There

was a shady tree growing in the yard, which for the rest was a wilderness of bricks and dusty creepers. Everything was shattered and in ruins—windows gone, doors gone and great gaping wounds in the brickwork. It looked as if the whole house might fall in with a crash at any moment.

From the verandah came a little tattered scrap of a thing to meet me, a brown pickney of three or four, with eyes like a marmoset and a shy finger in his mouth. And close upon his heels the lady herself; quick, tiny, bird-like, a diminutive figure in a neat cotton garment and an enormous shady hat. I told her who I was and she welcomed me graciously, leading the way into the house.

"See," she said proudly, standing for a moment in the doorway; "it is not luxurious, but I have done everything to make things comfortable; and I sleep in a hammock in the garden."

I looked. In one corner of the large empty room was a big box or stand covered with completed hats and hats in the making. Along an opposite wall was a bench. Two or three cardboard discs lay on the floor. That was the furniture. On the walls she had tacked great stems of shaggy palm which stood upright and almost reached to the ceiling. The breeze from the sea came in through the sashless windows and the empty doorways and rustled the dried palm leaves.

I sat down on the bench. Picking up one of the cardboard discs, she threw it down at my feet and sat cross-legged upon it. The black baby hovered a little distance away; his finger in his mouth, and his eyes like a wistful monkey's, watching us.

Once seated she began to pour forth a torrent of words. Here she lived happily, buying bread, which was all she needed, close by. The garden was her

bedroom, the sea her bath. She wore one garment, and made enough out of her hats to keep herself and pay for the publishing of her book, which was priced at twenty-five cents, but which she always gave away. Was I happy? Yes, sometimes. Well, she would teach me how to be happy always. I was just to live as she did, and think as she thought, and I would be happy always.

She stopped suddenly and eyed me with dissatisfaction. I was too "fashionable," cared too much about clothes. I wouldn't mind betting that the stuff in her dress cost as much as the stuff in mine. She'd made hers herself, while I had paid to have mine made, that was all. And I had a few things on underneath which ran up the expenses a little; but those were not what she was quarrelling with. No matter, let us get on. Had I read her book?

I could feel I was beginning to look frightened and a little bit stupid. Yes, I had read it. What did I think of it? I was afraid I didn't quite understand it. What didn't I understand? I wasn't quite sure. Couldn't I quote some of the parts so that she could explain them to me? I didn't think I could. I never could remember *anything* to quote it correctly. She looked at me critically and with some disappointment. She had, she said, expected through reading my book that I would be a shade above the ordinary in thinking powers, and that was why she had selected me. Everything was so simple the way she had put it—

> The same story happened over again,
> And over and over and over again.
> From earth to heaven and heaven to earth,
> Ever giving higher ambitions birth,
> Creatures travelled—changing combination,
> For the past they considered an abomination.
> The Diamond King, the brilliant and clever,
> The ruling position kept ever and ever;

In heaven and on earth he took the lead,
And without his consent was started no breed.
Twelve other powers of different hue
From the first were his servants, faithful and true.
And Satan, the necessary dirty tool,
Never got over the King's reign stool.

And so the mighty evolution took place
From the bare earth up to the human race,
From the animal man to the Christ of love
And his heavenly image, the Father above.

Wasn't that clear enough to anybody ? And this—

All like children are bound to become,
And all will be fit for the Heavenly home.
No such thing there'll be as "filthy,"
And nobody of a lie will be guilty.
The dinners provided in the twinkling of an eye[1]
Will not only better satisfy
But have no such thing as wasted matter;
And that will be much cleaner and better.
Animal pets and all will thus eat,
So that they too will be clean and neat.
And the lamb and the lion will rest together,
And the cat from the bird won't pull a feather;
The Chief of life will change all natures
In the end to be better than animal creatures.
All deception in the end is bound to cease,
For through walls and distances with ease
All will learn to hear and see and know,
And a liar therefore won't have any show.
Who would take the trouble to tell a fib
Knowing that no one will take the tip?
Who would do anything for which he must blush
When there is no hiding behind any bush?

What was it that was troubling me ?

I watched her as she talked, full to overflowing with the message she had to give and the lesson she hoped to teach. For her as a human being I did not exist. For some unexplainable reason Providence had given her the thing to say and me the power to get it heard.

[1] An allusion to the feeding of the five thousand mentioned earlier:

"Christ was not the first who got up a dinner,
In the twinkling of an eye to feed a poor sinner."

Here was a bucket in which to carry water to the dying, an ass to ride on. That same Providence which had given the song to her and the voice to me had brought us together for a purpose, it could not be doubted. She was not there to neglect that purpose. She did not neglect that purpose.

I got away in time for late lunch. Next morning there came a letter of eight or nine pages. In it she said—

" I would like you to try very hard to understand me, because I would like you to write a book entirely different from what you have done hitherto. It does not matter if you contradict some of your past ideas—you can do it wisely and shamelessly with the simple excuse that you have grown. You can also own (if you like) that you have eaten or digested some one else to keep that some one from being wasted. You and I are far apart—there is an enormous gulf between us, and you must not decide against me too rashly. Of course I think myself ahead of you. I have spent three and three-quarter years in a lunatic asylum, six weeks in prison, and four years in a place called S—— Poor-house. My experiences have been among the humble and outcasts of humanity as well as the upper and middle classes.

" I have very good reason for living as I do, but I do not consider myself better for that matter than you, for instance, who like to be fashionable—evidently. Still I think I am richer than you. . . .

" If you go to Newcastle for pleasure merely, do not stay too long, please, and when you come back do not allow little fool people to engage too much of your time, so that I can have you until I feel I have finished with you. When you come again I shall put up work at once and wash myself, and take you to the sea-beach

for the purpose of getting you to take me in. Perhaps you will have to spend more than one day with me. Don't mind making arrangements for lunch—we can buy some bread at the shop. I know of a nice quiet place to take you to.

"In fact—I have just been up-stairs and found it much cooler there than down-stairs—if you like you can hide away entirely with me until you have finished with me. I have no such thing as a bed, but we could easily make shift somehow. And I have no other bath but the sea, but that would do, would it not?

"This house is said to be haunted by a ghost, therefore it cannot sell, but I daresay you don't mind."

There was a good deal more to do with her ideas upon the management of universal affairs, and the large part I could play if I would follow the lines she laid down, and she finished with a repetition of her invitation for me to stay with her, and if not to stay at least to spend a day by the seaside. "I want," she said, "to have a talk with you about men and love affairs—about your heart and mine."

I did not go again. It was all right in the morning in the sunshine, with the little brown baby hovering round with his finger in his mouth. But afterwards, when the sun had disappeared and the darkness had shut down; when the little brown baby would have gone home to his shanty over the way, and there would have been nothing left but the rats and mice, and the rustling palm leaves on the tottering walls and the ghostly moonlight streaming lividly through the empty window-frames—I am afraid of things like that. . . .

Still I would like to have heard about men and love affairs, about her heart and mine.

ON PUNISHMENTS METED OUT FOR SMALL ECONOMIES, AND THE RETURN FROM NEWCASTLE

XIII

ON PUNISHMENTS METED OUT FOR SMALL ECONOMIES, AND THE RETURN FROM NEWCASTLE.

NEVER yet have I made a definite and specific attempt to live within my means that I have not been severely punished for it. What the lesson is that I am supposed to learn by my punishments I don't quite know yet; but that there is a direct purpose in the swift Nemesis that follows so closely on the heels of my economies I must believe, or else I would not be able to hold on to my faith in underlying principles; and a faith in underlying principles is as good as face massage any day, besides being one of the few garments that is always better for being made in the house, if I may be allowed to mix my metaphor a little for the sake of ease. If that sounds more flippant than you please, look into it and see how serious it is.

There are many examples that come crowding into my mind as I write, but one is enough to give.

During a certain summer when the fashions ordered sleeves to be very short and gloves necessarily very long, I was staying on the river at Bray. For Bray you took a third-class return ticket from Paddington to Taplow, and thought yourself not extravagant if you went up to town once during the week.

Once during the week I went up to town. In the

usual hurried flight from the house at the last moment I forgot my ticket and arrived at the station without it. On the train I told the collector: he gave me a single, charged me one shilling and elevenpence for it, and told me I could recover at the other end.

For some time I did not attempt to recover. Then one day I took myself to task and pulled up. Unless I taught myself that one and elevenpence was one and elevenpence I should end my life by not having even one and elevenpence. On the next visit to town I hunted over Paddington Station till I found the Inquiry Office.

The Inquiry Office has very nice big doors to it; but they, as far as I can remember, are rather heavy doors. I did not manage them quite the right way, because, although I got through them, I lost a thumb in the struggle; only a kid one, but still I lost it.

The clerk was very pleasant. He could not give me one and elevenpence immediately on the spot, but if I would write to —— at —— I would hear more about the matter. I thanked him and went away.

That afternoon I was due at a highly select tea-party of two. You cannot go to a highly select tea-party of two with your thumb hanging out—and count. I wanted to count, so I had to buy a new pair of gloves. The kind that covered the elbow cost eight shillings, and were next the silk stocking counter. Any woman will know what I mean, and a moderately intelligent man might easily guess.

For some time the Railway Department and I corresponded closely, and at last arrived an order for the amount, less something for something which I cannot remember now. It was nice to see it, but adding on the sixteen shillings spent to get it, and the paper and postage and time and energy devoted to the corre-

spondence, I did not feel quite sure that I had got the bargain it appeared to be at first sight.

That, I have brought out as a pendant for my trip to Newcastle. Together they are going to hang over the mantel-piece of my mind, in case I ever attempt to waste money on the same form of extravagance again.

In the matter of Newcastle I was as well served. Invited for a week-end I made inquiries about travelling, and found that as I could not ride my only way was a carriage. It would cost two pounds there and two pounds back. I set about to reduce expenses and at last evolved this : by sending the boy with my bag on the tram to Papine and following later in another tram myself, I would save ten shillings on my carriage hire. It is a bore and a nuisance and many other things besides to have to bend one's intelligence to the saving of shillings on legitimate carriage hire, but at times it has to be done. That there are rich people who make a hobby of doing it one knows, but, as one also knows, rich people can afford to have hobbies that poor ones would not allow themselves to think of.

On the return journey I would walk. There was nothing very terrible in five miles down the mountains along a shady bridle-path; and it would be shady if I started early enough. I had found that out. A slight expenditure of thought and physical energy would bring me my week-end for two pounds instead of four. I got no pleasure out of the bargain, but a good deal out of the prospect of going to Newcastle.

There was the usual delay in starting. Half-past five is the hour to begin the descent, but half-past five in Jamaica is a very dim hour to begin a lonely pilgrimage through the mountains. Even if I had been up I doubt if I would have had the courage, but I wasn't up. At a quarter to eight I walked on to the verandah of

the bungalow, and at eight o'clock we sat down to breakfast. I *thought* we started about an hour after, but now I know by the time at which I limped into Gordon Town that we must have been much later than that.

My bag stayed behind to go down by the regimental cart, and Kitty, her mother and I started away: they were going to see me as far down the road as Cold Spring and then turn back home again in time for lunch. They had made a parcel of sandwiches and cake to stay me lest I fainted by the wayside. It was quite a gay beginning.

As we passed the hut I had been sleeping in my hostess came out.

"Going for a walk?" she asked.

Kitty's mother explained. I was walking to Gordon Town: they were going a little of the way with me.

She looked at me aghast. "You are walking all the way?" she exclaimed.

"Along the bridle-path," said Kitty's mother. "It's quite a nice walk if you take it slowly."

She went on looking at me in dismay. "I think it's a dreadful walk," she said. "I am a good walker, but I wouldn't dream of doing it."

I didn't take much heed. It was the usual short cut up and down. Kitty's mother had ridden it; three of the officers had gone down a few hours before me: what they could do without considering, I could surely do with a little thought. We said good-bye and went on.

As far as Kitty and her mother came with me it was perfect. The road was easy to travel, and so well shaded from the sun that the dew still sparkled among the leaves that brushed us as we walked. We took no notice of the time. Why should one think of time on a fresh young morning when one walked and talked with

those who pleased one? There were berries to pick, and ferns, and sweet-scented rose-apples. And Kitty's mother found a doll's Christmas tree which had to be dressed before we could leave it with tiny silver and red and gold balls, and hung with coloured candles no bigger than the smallest wax matches. . . . Watches and clocks do not belong to a morning like that.

Where the path crossed the driving road some way below Cold Spring and fell again down the hill-side we stopped, sat down, and devoured the sandwiches. Then with many good-byes we went our different ways.

"I wish," said Kitty's mother, "that we had your walk instead of ours. You are in the shade as far as Gordon Town, and it is downhill all the way."

She was right about it being downhill all the way, but she was wrong about the shade. Immediately the path rounded the elbow of the next hill the sun struck it, and except in the deep clefts of the valleys there was blazing, burning sun the rest of the road to Gordon Town.

I shall never think of that scorching, blistering, interminable scramble without a shudder. Not far from Newcastle I had picked up a thick piece of bamboo about six feet long. If it had not been for that pole, which several times during the pleasant part of the walk I had had half a mind to throw away, I do not believe I ever would have got to Gordon Town. It was not walking, it was slithering, slipping, sliding, with your feet rushing on and your body painfully holding back. At every two or three steps the ground would loosen and fall away in a little shower of dust and stones from under me, and I would find myself breathlessly dangling from the bamboo pole; then another rush, another slipping and another saving; and so on, as it seemed, for ever and ever and ever

Sometimes the solitude and the silence frightened me a little. It would have been so useless to cry for help if help were needed. For a long way I met no one, but once, in one of the most lonely stretches, I heard footsteps coming round one of the bends in the path. It was a fine, tall negro walking in the leisurely fashion that is the only way in which to accomplish long distances. I wished him good-day and he answered pleasantly as he passed. There is very little to be feared from the villager, but when one remembers what things do happen everywhere, and also that all men who walk in the country are not necessarily of the country, one cannot help a sudden fear.

Further down it became less lonely. Every now and then I met a market woman returning, and again, two or three coolies in earnest conversation. It is just about as useless to ask the negro how far it is to anywhere as it is to ask the peasant or the policeman in one's own country. If it is a little way the Jamaican says affably, " Not too far, mistress "; if a long way he says, " Far enough, mistress," and there you are, no better off than he found you. But the coolie is an East India man and might have a more instructive way with him. My feet were aching and sore; I wanted desperately to know how soon I should get to Gordon Town. I stopped before them and spoke.

" How far is it to Gordon Town ? " I asked.

The coolies drew up and looked at me : I was rather an object.

" Far enough," said one compassionately.

I seemed to be walking for years. Just before the bridle-path finished at the driving road, a stump on the side of the path hooked in my skirt, catching me as I fled and flinging me face downwards in the dust. The dispatch case I carried shot out of my hand away down

the road, the linen of my skirt ripped without disentangling me. I picked myself up painfully and went on to retrieve the case. I felt I might have to pass Tibet on the way to Gordon Town. . . . It seemed no nearer than that.

At ten minutes past one I crawled into the town to find that the last carriage had just left and no one could tell when there would be another. For one hour and a quarter I sat on the verandah of the little hotel, watching a captive monkey pull a croton bush to pieces. That monkey was memorable as being, with the exception of one that travelled home on the boat, the only monkey I ever met in the tropics. So does one have one's imagination denuded. I, who had seen myself reclining under the shade of giant trees while dazzling birds flew from branch to branch, monkeys pelted me with coco-nuts and obsequious negroes salaamed before me. Sunday afternoon in one's extreme youth, with *Religion in Many Lands*, and all the woodcuts that went to make it palatable, create an impression not willingly wiped out. I parted with my dreams resentfully.

A kind and sympathetic person helped me out of the carriage at the other end, got my bath ready and took off my boots for me. I went to bed that night with whisky and ice poultices on my feet, could not wear shoes for days, and had to do shopping necessary for my journey to Panama in a carriage at so much per morning. Also I lost three nails through the battering of my unhappy toes.

None but the most hardened reprobate could dare to disregard a warning of such vehemence. I am no reprobate, I long to be good—in *that* way.

ON MARRIAGE AND THINGS ATTENDANT UPON IT

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XIV

ON MARRIAGE AND THINGS ATTENDANT UPON IT

THE attitude of mind of the Jamaican negress with regard to marriage is a distinctly advanced one. Whether it is common to the race and obtains in the other islands I do not know, but the simple logic of her argument is very convincing.

The actual marriage ceremony carries with it impositions that she knows herself better to be without. An earthquake or a violent disaster generally brings about a rush of marriages, but it would be rather short-sighted to take that as an expression of higher morality —if such it be called—on their part. They are primitives, highly emotional, and, like children, ready to be frightened by any bogey that is held up to them. If the pastor says, " All those who live together without the blessing of the Church are living in sin, and if they die so, they die in sin and will surely go to hell," when a very practical hell of an earthquake suddenly yawns under their feet, naturally they flee panic-stricken to the dispenser of safety passes. I don't mean in the least degree to be irreverent, but if some one else told them that with equal conviction that they would go to hell unless they painted their noses yellow, they would run at the same warning to the nearest place where yellow paint could be got.

When the fear subsides, they go back quietly and

inoffensively to their old manner of living. The woman has been taught no shame and she feels none. Her argument is this : " If we love each other, what need is there of marrying ? If we don't, we are able to leave each other." As long as they are not married the man works for her, and if he doesn't she is free to get rid of him and have one who does. But directly they marry it is a generally understood thing that she will have to keep *him.* There may be neglect and desertion and promiscuity among them, but is there no neglect or desertion or promiscuity among us ? We who call it morality to tie together two comparative strangers so inextricably that they have either to remain most hideously bound or else wade in the mud to get free. It would seem as if there were many lessons to be learnt from the negroes in their domestic relationship. I have never, but once, seen a negro woman, in all the months I was among them, treat harshly or unkindly, or indeed any way but tenderly, the children around her, and I have seen a man whose woman had left him, fighting with all his wits to keep with him the " bastard," as we would call it that she had borne him. As fast as he stole the baby from her she would steal it back again, and so on, till the weaker gave way. The child, legitimate or otherwise, is a factor.

I went in one night to a garden where a picnic was going on. A picnic generally means in Jamaica a coloured dance in a garden by the light of a few paper lanterns, with a booth for soft drinks and cakes, and a band of two instruments to lead the dancing. When I was tired of watching the dancers I went over to one of the shacks close by under the coconut palms. A grandmother with a baby in her arms stood at the door, and beside her was a hideous-looking negress, thin and lanky, with her face tied up for toothache.

The grandmother greeted me; they are a courteous people.

"Do you live here?" I asked.

She nodded. "Yes, mistress; would you like to see the house?"

I followed her in: it was like a large box divided into four rooms. The first was a sitting-room, very bare; the second, a bedroom with a large bed. The lady with the toothache stroked one of the posts lovingly.

"Alone I sleep here," she said.

The next had a larger bed, a four-poster with a canopied top. There was nothing in the room but the bed; it took up the whole of the floor. In this the grandmother did the honours. "I sleep here with the others," she said; then she opened the door into the last room with a smaller bed and walls pasted over with pictures. "This," she said, with a quite unconscious grandeur, "is the baby's apartment." They were "rooms" till it came to the baby's.

I don't want to argue against marriage. It must have been a necessary thing for the race, or else it would not have held so long; and as a business contract I should think it is quite a good thing. But as a business contract it needs a good deal of adjusting for present uses if there is to be any decent and true morality in it. It can't be thought right in these days of enlightenment, when even lost dogs have champions, and every care is taken to prolong the life of the epileptic and the imbecile, that there should be no help for two fools who at a period of probably very embryonic intelligence put their arms round each other and jumped without any conception of its depth into the water together.

I know all about the arguments against easy divorce. "It would break up the home life." It would. It would break up the unhappy home life, that is what it is for,

and the sooner the better. Have all men forgotten their own childhood so easily that they attribute to children no more knowledge than that which is deliberately taught them? Do you think a child does not *feel* the unhappy truth of the life it lives in, no matter how cleverly the lie may be sustained? Has that clever world, which is so glibly legislating to cure all evils, forgotten the instinct that belongs to all animals, the young animal of man not excepted? When I was no more than eight I would be sent sometimes to the High-road to buy butter or cotton, or whatever it was that the house was short of at the particular moment. To go to some of the shops I had to pass a toyshop. Getting by that shop was an agony. As a youngster, if anything went wrong I used on such occasions to pray. One did it just as simply as one said, "Pass the jam," if you wanted jam, or "Please do up my pinafore," if the button came undone. I can feel my feet now trying to run away as I forced them to carry me past the door. I can feel the cold sweat that would break over me if the man happened to be standing at the door. He did not speak to me; he just stood with his little ferret face looking up or down the street, smiling slightly. Sometimes my prayers were heard and I would get by without seeing him. The shop itself was fear enough, but there were times when the short, mean figure with its smiling, ferrety eyes would make me so sick with *something* that I would turn back and walk three times the distance to get home another way. I never said anything at home. If I had, they would have asked me why I was afraid, and I would not have known. And a child never does say anything about the things that really terrify it. That is why no one ever knows except the few who have not forgotten.

When I grew up I lost that fear of the man and the

toyshop, and if I thought of it I wondered why I had been afraid, and forgot again. But one day, twelve years later, I was looking through an evening paper, and I saw that the man had been arrested for assault upon a little child. Then I knew.

The child of a loveless household senses the trouble and suffers by it just as I sensed the other thing and suffered by it. It knows no more than I knew, but it feels; and very often, when the lie is not attempted, it has the horror of seeing its deities at war. And what is worse, it more often has to stand by and watch the daily infliction of sorrows it is powerless to redress; sorrows made by lack of understanding, by the absolute unsuitability to each other of two people who have, through some extraordinary mischance, been drawn together and not found out their mistake till it was conventionally too late. A child knows that very early: it sees the two that it loves hurting and humiliating each other a dozen times a day, and it is conscious all the time of its own pain and its own helplessness. Is it worth keeping the home together for that?

And another objection. If the barriers are down the mob will stampede. I don't believe it. I believe the world on the average is a quite decent, normal person, who, if it were taught in its youth to love and respect certain virtues for the sake of their inherent beauty, and *not* because it might get rapped over the knuckles if it didn't, would grow up loving those virtues as it now appears to love the vices. Vice has been made far too attractive by the good people who preach against it. Virtue has been hurled at the youngster as a duty instead of unfolded as a beauty, and no wonder he is bored. I believe that satisfaction, and not satiety, is what mankind wants, and it is the law, and not the want of law, that makes the libertine. Each succeeding age of man

is simply a repetition of the age which preceded it, and needs just about the same treatment. Set the jam upon the highest shelf, tell the youngster that on no account must he touch it, and you transform an ordinary consumer of jam into a lustful debauchee. He knows that jam is for ever denied him—because to a child, twenty-four jamless hours is a lifetime, any one knows that—and all his energy and his will is concentrated upon the getting, *somehow*, of that jam. He will, with no real enjoyment, and a great deal of discomfort to himself, swallow twice as much as he wants because he knows it is his only chance. He will be very sick. But deep down under everything, and smarting from the chastisement that he has unerringly gone out to seek, he will not be sorry.

Put the jam within his reach, tell him that for certain reasons, if he eats too much, he will get a tummy-ache, and very probably he will ogle it, and leave it alone. If he takes it he will get his tummy-ache, and ten to one he will be very sorry. That will be valuable experience.

In the same way, if you are bent upon turning natural inclinations into sins, you are going to make sinners faster than you can count them. It is natural to mate, but a boy can be taught that it is finer to suffer the pangs of his youthful desires than to buy his too early initiation from a harlot; that fastidiousness in this way is no more an eccentricity than brushing his teeth, and just as necessary for his health: and that to deny himself sordid things for the love of something *un*sordid is going to return him a hundred-fold that which he has denied himself. Teach him that divine usury, and teach the girl that it is as unholy to sell her body in a church as in a street, and you will emaciate your divorce list very considerably. And teach the man and the maid to know *themselves* honestly and unashamedly,

and withal proudly, before they attempt to know each other.

I know I have only said over again what my very much betters have said very much better before me; and I know that a Divorce Commission has been sitting. But I felt like saying it; and after all you can easily skip it if you don't care about it: that is often done.

Once upon a time, not so very long ago, there was a nice little Jamaican dressmaker; and for a number of years she made dresses for a lady—the one who told me the story—and the lady's daughter. At last she came one day and said she could no longer make any more dresses for them, as she was giving up business and going to be married. The lady expressed her very sincere regret at losing her, but suggested that perhaps she might recommend some one to take her place.

"Indeed," said the little dressmaker simply, "my mother, Miss Boyd, will be only too glad to."

An attitude of mind as unselfconscious as that towards such a situation seems an improvement upon ours, when one thinks what a difference it makes to the standing of the child and the state of the child's mind.

ON TWO INTERESTING BOOKS

XV

ON TWO INTERESTING BOOKS

THERE are two books to do with Jamaica that I suppose all those who are interested in Jamaica will have read. But apart from their topical bearing they are of very great interest in themselves. One is *Lady Nugent's Journal*,[1] and the other is a collection of the Annancy stories made by Mr. Walter Jekyll.[2]

The Annancy stories are to Jamaica what the Brer Rabbit stories are to America. Annancy is a wicked old trouble-maker in the form of a spider, and wherever he goes there is "something doing." The stories generally contain a moral, and of course are told by word of mouth among the negroes. Every story finishes with the words, "Jack Mantora me no choose none," which is a courteous means of assuring the one to whom the story is told that there is no personal application in it. The "Jack" is the person to whom the story is told; "me no choose none" means, "I do not speak of any one here."

One of the most delightful, into which Annancy, however, does not come, is the story of King Daniel. I will take the liberty of quoting without Mr. Jekyll's permission, as I shall not have time to find out where he is, to ask it.

[1] *Lady Nugent's Journal*. Reprinted from a journal kept by Maria Lady Nugent from 1801 to 1815, issued for private circulation in 1839. Edited by Frank Cundell, F.S.A., Adam and Charles Black: London.

[2] *Jamaican Song and Story*: Walter Jekyll.

THE MULBERRY TREE

King Daniel

There were two young lady name Miss Wenchy an' Miss Lumpy. The King Daniel was courtening to Miss Wenchy, an' the day when they was to get marry Miss Lumpy carry Miss Wenchy an' show him a flowers in the pond. Miss Wenchy go to pick it, an' Miss Lumpy shub him in de pond.

An' she said, "T'ank God nobody see me."

Now a Parrot sat up on a tree, an' jes' as Miss Lumpy say, "T'ank God nobody see me," the Parrot say, "I see you dough!"

Then Miss Lumpy said to the Parrot, "Do, my pretty Polly, don't you tell, an' Ill give you a silver door an' a golden cage."

And the Parrot sing—

"No, no, I don't want it;
For the same you serve another one
You will serve me the same."

"Oh do, my pretty Polly, don't you tell, an' Ill give you a silver door an' a golden cage."

But the Parrot wouldn't stay, and he fly from houses to houses singing this tune—

"I brought, I brought a news
To the young King Daniel;
Miss Lumpy kill Miss Wenchy loss
On becount of young King Daniel."

At last the Parrot got to the table where the young King Daniel was. An' Miss Lumpy was into a room crying. Many pocket-handkerchief she got wet with tears.

An' the Parrot sing the same song—

"I brought, I brought a news
To the young King Daniel;
Miss Lumpy kill Miss Wenchy loss
On becount of young King Daniel."

Then Miss Lumpy call out, "Oh, drive away that nasty bird, for Miss Wenchy head hurting her."

But King Daniel wouldn't have it so, but said, "I heard my name call. I would like to know what is it."

An' the Parrot fly near upon the King's shoulder, an' tell him what become of Miss Wenchy. An' they go down an' look in the room an' find her not.

An' pretty Polly take them to the pond, and show them where Miss Wenchy is, an' she was drown.

Then the King call Miss Lumpy, an' head him up into a barrel an' fasten it up with tenpenny nails, an' carry him up to a high hill an' let him go down the gully, an' he drop in the gully pom' galong.

An' the Parrot laugh—"Ha! ha! Ha! ha!"

Jack Mantora me no choose none.

Knowing the native one can understand the verve with which he would tell this story, and hundreds of others like it. They are born mimics. At one house where I lived for some months while I was in Kingston there was a butler called Joe. Joe looked as if he were made of very thick black wood very highly beeswaxed. He waited at table in a sort of jerky, staring trance. I once happened to say to the mistress of the house that I had often wondered if in private life Joe could look any different. We were alone that evening, sitting on a couch in the dining-room just after dinner. For answer she called Joe, who was in the kitchen next door.

Joe presented himself stiffly, like a soldier on duty; the same startled, trance-like stare in his eyes that was there when he waited at table.

"You remember Mr. X.?" said his mistress.

"Yes, mistress." Joe's speech came from him

quickly, breathlessly, and with the least suspicion of a lisp.

"And Mr. Y.?"

"Yes, mistress."

I had heard of both X. and Y. They were two young Englishmen who had been on duty in Jamaica at one time. X. had a nervous habit of throwing his head back as he talked; and Y. stuttered rather badly.

"I was Mr. X.'s servant for a long time," said Joe proudly.

"He was a good master, wasn't he?" queried the mistress lazily.

"A very good one, mistress," answered Joe stoutly. "He used to say to me, 'Joe'"——

Whereupon began ten minutes of the most vivid, unselfconscious acting I've ever seen anywhere in my life. At first I thought he was ill, for without any warning his head began to move alarmingly; then after a while he seemed unable to control his speech. But, applying myself, I discovered it to be a triangular conversation between Mr. X., Mr. Y. and Joe himself. He slipped so quickly and so unnoticeably from one to the other that, until I got into the swing, the changes, to me, were bewildering, but never did Joe make a mistake in mixing the gestures or the intonation of all three. When he was Joe he was Joe exactly as I knew him at table; when he stuttered his head was still as need be; when he jerked it his speech was clear with just that sharp, clipping of his words that speaks a certain Englishman all the world over.

The scene finished, Joe relapsed into his startled trance and waited for dismissal, as if he had not spoken an unusual word. Dismissed, he wheeled round and disappeared into the kitchen. I looked at the door, through which he had departed, blankly: that was the

Joe whose stolidity I had believed one could not have cleaved with an axe nor unsettled with a blast of dynamite!

His mistress smiled. "What are you thinking of?" she asked.

"I was wondering," I said slowly, "what *we* look like in the kitchen."

* * * * * *

The Jamaican part of *Lady Nugent's Journal* covers the period when Sir George Nugent was out here as Governor of the island, from the year 1801 to 1806, or rather 1805, for Lady Nugent took her children back to England in June of 1805, and Sir George did not leave Jamaica till February 1806.

They were married three and a half years before they went out, she being about twenty-six at the time of her marriage, and her husband forty. What it must have been like to travel in those days one rather shudders to think of. Sixteen days seemed, with all the comforts afforded by present-day contrivances, quite long enough for me. As the Nugents did it, over nine weeks elapsed between the embarkation from Portsmouth and the sighting of Jamaica—just twice as long as it takes to go to Australia if you travel across country to Marseilles.

Previous to that time, England had been having her peck of troubles at home and abroad. In February of 1793 France had declared war against her; in October 1796 Spain had declared war against her; and in August of 1798 she was forced to evacuate San Domingo.

With Haiti and San Domingo in a constant state of revolution, and offering, by the success of their uprisings, an example to the negroes of the other islands, with the surrounding waters alive with enemies, and yellow fever exacting its daily toll, it is small wonder that when, a few days after their return to England from

Dublin, they hear of the General's appointment to Jamaica, they are neither of them " over well pleased." Now-a-days, a cable or a wireless, and an army of battleships is speeding to the rescue. Then, it was whatever frigate happened to be calling that took your dispatches, and nine weeks at least to your beloved country.

" But like good soldiers," says the little philosopher, " we made up our minds to obey." She " would rather her little house in Hampstead " than " Governor's lady to the blackies," but Governor's lady to the blackies it has to be.

There are no babies to take out, and perhaps that is as well considering the fare. " Salt tripe for dinner, which increased Colonel Noble's misery beyond anything." She laughs, and consoles herself that the biscuits and gingerbread they brought themselves are so good.

Poor Colonel Noble dies of his miseries a few days later. They do not travel furiously. " We are now going six knots an hour, but must soon slacken sail for the dull-sailing ships " (the Convoy).

There are many things to amuse them : flying fish, and the usual masquerade of Crossing the Line. And they chase a Spanish vessel, but have to let her be, much to the sailor's disappointment, as she carries a pass from Jamaica.

And she learns how to make things comfortable for herself. " I hate the cabin," she says, ".and I live entirely upon deck. My night-caps are so smart that I have tied all my hair up under them, and so sit on deck in the most comfortable manner. . . . To tell the truth I really think I look better in my night-cap than in my bonnet, or quite as well; and as I am surrounded by men who do not know a night-cap from a day-cap, it is no matter what I do, so I please myself."

One hundred and eleven years after that, an American girl, having evidently made the same discovery, was doing the same thing on a United Fruit Company's steamer from New York to Panama. In these days we call them boudoir caps, but it is the same thing exactly.

LADY NUGENT'S JOURNAL (*continued*)

XVI

LADY NUGENT'S JOURNAL (*continued*)

In this diary, which is kept very faithfully during the four years of residence in Jamaica, and for nine years after in England and in India, she gives one vivid glimpses of many things, many customs and not a few notable people.

That Lady Nugent was very charming to look upon is set out clearly in the portrait at the beginning of the book. But the head and shoulders, draped in a lovely fashion that is obviously copied from the Tanagra figures, give one the idea of a rather magnificent build, and she tells us very certainly that she is a *little* woman. "It is wonderful how much a *high station*" (the italics are hers, and one can see her making them, straight, firm lines under the fine, sloping Italian handwriting that belonged to the period of early samplers and hair-work) "embellishes! I heard it whispered on parade this morning, that General Nugent was one of the *finest men* that ever was seen, and Mrs. Nugent" (she was Mrs. Nugent then), "although small, *a perfect* beauty!"

To demonstrate this she quotes some verses "left in Grosvenor Street for me by a very smart footman who would give no name," and signed ALDIBORONTIPHOSCOPHORNIO, which strikes one as being a fairly good hedge to hide behind. They run—

THE MULBERRY TREE

"How many charms are there combin'd
Within that little frame!
You seem by Nature's self design'd
All Nature's love to claim.

"How can so small a space contain
So wondrous large a heart?
I fear the riddle to explain
Would baffle every art.

"'Twas thus I reason'd, till, at last,
Made by experience wise,
'Twas only at my folly past
I felt the least surprise.

"Kind Nature's wisdom I confest,
Who, with delightful art,
Whate'er she borrowed from the rest
Has added to the heart."

One wonders whether it was a proper appreciation of his verse or a wholesome fear of the husband in the offing that made the writer build up ALDIBORONTIPHOSCOPHORNIO for his defence. It is true that there is nothing desperately incriminating in the nature of the poem, but one never knows what is behind things. Although the men of that age apparently talked like stable-boys and drank like camels, and, having more than Mr. Owen Seamen's word for it that "there is nothing new in the sun, and certainly not in the shade," we must only believe that they kissed and loved in the way their forefathers had done before them and their grandchildren would do after them; yet when it came to making love on paper and in verse, the china figures on the mantelpiece seem swooning frenzies by comparison. To us it may have the appearance of an undue caution to send such verses by an anonymous footman and sign yourself ALDIBORONTIPHOSCOPHORNIO at the same time, but, as I said, one never knows.

On arrival they go to King's House in Spanish Town. King's House is now in Kingston, about three or four miles out of the town, and lying between the Hope and

the Constant Spring Road. It was rebuilt after the last earthquake. The old King's House at Spanish Town (built between 1759 and 1762) seems to have suffered very little by the earthquake. At the time of building it was called "the noblest and best edifice of the kind either in North America or any of the British Colonies in the West Indies." The editor of the *Journal* agrees with Monk Lewis, who called it "a large, clumsy-looking brick building."

For my part I am against both Mr. Cundall and Monk Lewis, but I don't know if that is because my architectural tastes are better than theirs, or because I shall never forget the box of bricks I had when I was little. Out of that box of bricks I could, with the exception of the windows, pretty well reconstruct King's House, Spanish Town, or St. Jago de Vega, as Spanish Town is still called upon the milestones. There is the imposing three-cornered piece of wood that rests on four dignified columns for the portico; the long, straight blocks, mounted one behind the other, for the broad, shallow steps leading to the portico; and for the rest the long, low front with its double line of windows. As it comes to my mind now, standing sunning its faded red brick and mellowed stone in the little sleepy, grass-grown square, there is something very fascinating about it. Inside it is cool, capacious and deserted. A wizened black caretaker opens the door, and we wander at will through the empty galleries and the dismantled rooms. One comes across odd bits of furniture stowed away in corners; old four-posters, chairs with broken seats. A good deal must have happened within those walls since 1762.

Poor Mrs. Nugent's domestic soul is being disturbed by the condition in which she finds things, and the day after the arrival, as soon as breakfast is over, the English servants begin to "set the black ladies to work, that

our rooms may be a little less filthy before we go to bed again." Was there ever a good housewife who was content with the cleaning of the one who went before? Yet one expects that she had good reason for her plaint. Also a certain gentleman offends her very much by his habits. "I wish Lord B. would wash his hands and use a nail-brush, for the black edges of his nails really make me sick. He has, besides, an extraordinary propensity to dip his fingers in every dish. Yesterday he absolutely helped himself to some fricassee with his dirty finger and thumb."

The eating is a continual source of astonishment to her. "I don't wonder now at the fever the people suffer from here—such eating and drinking I never saw! Such loads of all sorts of high, rich and seasonal things, and really gallons of wine and mixed liquors as they drink! I observed some of the party to-day eat of late breakfasts as if they had never eaten before—a dish of tea, another of coffee, a bumper of claret, another larger one of hoch-negus; then Madeira, sangaree, hot and cold meats, stews and fries, hot and cold fish pickled and plain; peppers, ginger, sweetmeats, acid fruits, sweet jellies—in short, it was all as astonishing as it was disgusting."

And again: "Our dinner at six was really so profuse that it is worth describing. The first course was entirely of fish, excepting jerked hog, in the centre, which is a way of dressing it by the Maroons. There was also a black crab pepper-pot, for which I asked the receipt. It is as follows: a capon stewed down, a large piece of beef and another of ham, also stewed to a jelly; then six dozen of land crabs, picked fine with their eggs and fat, onions, peppers, ochra, sweet herbs, and other vegetables of the country, cut small; and this well stewed makes black crab pepper-pot.

"The second course was of turtle, mutton, beef, turkey, goose, ducks, chickens, capons, ham, tongue, crab patties, etc., etc., etc. The third course was composed of sweets and fruits of all kinds. I was really sicker than usual at seeing such a profusion of eatables and rejoiced to get to my own room, and, after my usual levee of black and brown ladies, to go to bed."

Even Mr. Simon Taylor, an old resident, finds it a little arduous, for when she says good-bye to him, and expresses her regret at parting with him, he answers, "I am very sorry too, ma'am, but, good Almighty God, I must go home and cool coppers."

In another place she says, "I am not astonished at the general ill-health of the men in this country, for they eat like cormorants and drink like porpoises. But to-day I am out of humour and see everything *en noir*. Almost every man of the party was drunk, even to a boy of fifteen or sixteen who was obliged to be carried home. His father was very angry, but he had no right to be, as he set the example to him. Went up to my own room at twelve, but not to sleep, as they kept up their jollity much later. This, with the absence of my dear N., and my anxiety on his account, kept me awake almost the whole night."

She has many anxious days and nights about her "dear N.", poor lady, and little wonder, for he has to be here, there and everywhere; up at all hours, out in all weathers, harassed by troubles outside the island and beset with them in; riding out under the blazing sun for hours, and coming in, worn out, to attend to dispatches. "General N. crowded with unexpected business, and trying to get through all in time for church; and particularly as we have asked for the Sacrament to be administered to us to-day. I order our breakfast in our own room, and I help to copy as well as I can, but

in spite of all found it impossible to be ready by ten." Or, " My dear N. finished all his dispatches before dinner, but really fatigue was overpowering. . . . I could be of no use." Poor N. comes in with his face dreadfully red, which frightens her; or not so red, for which she is devoutly thankful and takes courage.

And all the while the people of their immediate circle, as well as those outside it, dropping away like leaves in autumn. Those whose covers were set for them last night are under the ground to-day. Sometimes a festivity will be deferred, but not very often. The harvest is too quick for that; there could be no gaieties at all if you were to wait for a week without a death. " Poor Mr. Radford of the Engineers died this morning, and Mr. Le Breton is dangerously ill. Try not to dwell upon these horrors, but, alas! how can I help it? . . . Nothing new in Society here, but all talking of the yellow fever, etc." And next day, " feel very low. Poor Mr. Le Breton is also dead of the fever."

There are many entries such as those. On the 5th it is, " Hear of the serious illness of poor Captain Cathcart," and on the 6th, " all went melancholy to bed, having heard not only of the death of Captain Cathcart, but also of five of his officers!"

But it is not always sadness. There are many amusing little recordings. She arranges with a certain Monsieur Grandjean d'Aubancourt to read French to her every morning for an hour. Like the rest of her generation she writes verse; and, as we all would do in the circumstances, tries it on Monsieur d'Aubancourt. " He thinks my verses very good," says she, " but query, does he speak the truth?" It makes one laugh to picture the scene. The Frenchman, engaged for the gentle purpose of reading his own beautiful language, for one hour every morning to the Governor's lady, suddenly

finding himself with a pistol held to his head: "What do you think of my verses?" He does the only thing possible to a kindly gentleman, but he leaves the lady with her finger to her brow. Are the verses good verses, or is the Frenchman a better courtier? It is very perplexing, but in the long run it leaves one with still a hope for one's verses.

In the December following their arrival in Jamaica, and about four years after her marriage, there is a mournful little entry. It is Sunday morning, and after church she and her "dear N." spend the rest of the morning together alone, a very unusual happiness for them. She "confesses her misery," and it is that she is afraid "the dear name of mother" will never greet her ear. Perhaps her dear N. consoles her, for she adds that her mind being relieved, she will never grumble any more but be grateful for the many blessings that are hers. But in a few months she has no need of her stoicism. The ill-health that she attributed to the climate and the conditions of life, is no more and no less than the little laggard for whom she has been longing. As the time goes on a Captain and Mrs. Elrington, with their five-weeks old baby, go to stay with her. She borrows the baby and spends her days nursing it; and her heart is moved so at the sight of it that one feels a little catch in the throat to read of her gladness.

"Feel deeply at the sight of an infant. A sort of happy agitation kept me awake all night. Oh, my God, hear my prayers, and grant me the blessing of a healthy child, endowed with such good and amiable qualities and disposition as may make it a blessing to its dear father and myself, and grant it may ever be worthy of Thy care and protection, by doing good in its generation, and serving Thee faithfully all its days, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Little George duly puts in an appearance, and before he can have even his eleven-months birthday in peace and possession, Louisa arrives to dispute the field; but George evidently likes her and there is no trouble. George begins his public life early, and when he is just a fortnight old goes out every morning with the General for a walk at gun-fire, the General doing the walking. At his christening he is wrapped "by way of a mantle in a muslin handkerchief embroidered in gold, a present from Madame Le Clerc," the beautiful Pauline Bonaparte, afterwards Princess Pauline Borghese. When he is less than three months old he is allowed to watch his mother dress for a ball. "For the benefit of posterity," she says, "I will describe my dress on that grand occasion. A crape dress embroidered in spangles, also sent me by Madame Le Clerc, but much richer than that which I wore at the last ball. Scarcely any sleeves to my dress, but a broad silver-spangled border to the shoulder-straps. The body made very like a child's frock, tying behind, and the skirt round, with not much train. A turban of spangled crape, like the dress, looped with pearls and a paradise feather; altogether looking like a *Sultana*. Diamond bandeau, cross, etc., and a pearl necklace and bracelets with diamond clasps. This dress, the admiration of all the world over, will perhaps fifty years hence be laughed at and considered as ridiculous as our grandmothers' hoops are to us now."

It is the turn of the wheel again. The description of the frock might have been cut out of to-day's fashion paper; and Lady Nugent could walk into any present-day ball-room in the gown without attracting any more attention than its obvious beauty would demand. *We* are laughing at the hoops, a little nervously, as one laughs at the fear one affects to despise, but in the natural and inevitable revolving of things the turn of

the hoop must come: which pun I could not very well have escaped if I had wanted to.

And so the diary goes on, and as one must leave off somewhere, perhaps here is a good place; but with just one more glimpse of Louisa, aged one month, being vaccinated before she is baptized. At this poor Lady Nugent suffers very much. "Feel much agitated, and wish this could be deferred till after she is made a Christian . . . but it is best not to run the risk of small-pox."

One sees the unregenerate Louisa, aged thirty-one days, calmly accepting the possibility of eternal damnation from the arm of a mulatto baby, and carelessly dangling between heaven and hell until she is snatched from her peril by Mr. Woodham, who arrives next day and cheats the devil of his choice and succulent little prey.

Oh, little Louisa, it was a very near shave for you! Through it all, very tenderly, one feels "*dear* Lady Nugent."

ON THE NEGRO PEOPLE AND THE COLOUR QUESTION

XVII

ON THE NEGRO PEOPLE AND THE COLOUR QUESTION

In Jamaica, outwardly, the colour question seems to matter very little. The strain has been so carelessly diffused through the island that, while it is easy enough to see where it begins, it would be very difficult for an outsider to say where it ended. Old residents profess to know apart from genealogy, but I have in my mind now a family that would certainly baffle all but those who call themselves experts, by their extraordinary and exquisite fairness. It is no bar to official position, and many times none to social distinction, but deep down under everything there is the underlying resentment against it, which is shown most strongly by those who, in ever so slight a degree, possess it. I was fortunate enough to be able to talk quite openly upon the subject with a woman who herself had it in her, but who, although she did not go about blazoning the truth, made no attempt to deny it. There was a dignity about her quiet acceptance of things that set her high above those who were trying to bluff it out. If only one might never learn false shame, how strong one might be. Why did the crow try to be thought a jackdaw? Why does the octoroon try to lie himself white? Why does the clerk try to hide his father's shop? Why

was I, when I was a youngster, ashamed to sit in the two-shilling seats when my friends were in the three ? It's damnable, that worm in us.

It seems to matter, and yet it *doesn't;* and then, again, it doesn't seem to matter, and suddenly it does. There is no ban except what the people here and there make among themselves. In the trams and the hotels and the theatres, black and yellow and white all sit together as they come. There are no Jim Crow cars, no railed-off places in the theatre, no restaurants set aside for the coloured people. Any one who has the money to buy may buy and enjoy, so long as he behaves himself fairly well, and he generally does.

I went one night to a performance by a travelling theatrical company in the hall that was being used while the theatre was being built. At the back of the hall was a crowd of about fifty young rowdies who called out greetings of a personal nature to each party as they entered and took their seats; but it was no more than might happen on any students' night in any provincial or colonial town anywhere.

Certainly it would seem that the coloured man in Jamaica is well off. He seems to have pretty well the whole say in municipal Governments and his voice is a strong one in the House of Assembly. I was in the House on the last day of the session and heard one of the members pleading eloquently upon the subject of the Early Closing Bill. He drew a woeful picture of the miseries and the slavery of the shop-assistants. How they had to work all day in the heat, day after day, without being allowed to sit down or even to speak to one another. Up to that time the shops had been closing at five, but the Bill went through victoriously, and the sorrows of the shop-assistant were lightened a little. The shops were to close every afternoon at four

except Wednesday, when they closed at two. I don't know if the member who got the Bill through ever shopped where I did, but if he did he must have forgotten a few things. I cannot say I ever *interrupted* a conversation between the assistants, except once, when shortness of time and shortness of temper got the better of me, but I have waited many times till they should finish. And to do them justice I will say that they never finished until they were ready.

As far as the trams were concerned they seemed to belong altogether to the market women. No one objects to that, with limitations, but I think a beneficent Government, in its zeal to do all possible for the coloured man, should not pass over the claims of the white one. He surely has his right to some consideration—not much, perhaps, but a little. Even now, having had time to get far away enough from the personal discomfort of it, I cannot see why the ordinary person who does not happen to be a market woman, yet who may not be able to afford her own carriage, should have to choose between paying exorbitant bus hire and being jostled and pushed and altogether disorganized by the herds of native women who are allowed to swamp the cars with their belongings.

The native woman is not an unpleasant person to sit beside. Indeed I would much rather travel five miles along the Constant Spring Road in a car full of negro market women than I would go half-a-mile in a King's Road bus with half-a-dozen Chelsea "lydies" from the back streets. The negro women as a rule are beautifully clean; their cotton clothes are washed often; and the cars are so built that the air blows through from all quarters. But when it comes that you have to travel in a car that is built only for passenger accommodation, and yet finds space for the enormous baskets the

women carry on their heads as they walk, it is another matter.

Bound for shopping, or calling as the case may be, you board your car, pay your fare, and are prepared to take up no more room than your twopence entitles you to. In a little while the car stops. There is a great chattering and hubbub going on outside in the road. The blinds are pushed up and fifteen market women with fifteen baskets clamber up and struggle to find their places. There may be fifteen places for them, but there are not five for the baskets; but still they have to go somewhere, and with scant courtesy they are shoved under you and in front of you and beside you until you have no more room to move in than has a brick in a wall. These baskets, which are enormous circular things, with shallow sides, are packed to overflowing with produce of all kinds, as well as bottles of lamp-oil, which, as any one knows, isn't too good for your frocks if it gets to them.

If the women get out first, you have to be bumped and pushed and jostled again while they extricate their belongings. If you get out first, you have to uproot yourself as well as you can, find a foothold, between the other baskets, and steeplechase out of the car the best way possible. No one makes room for you or tries to adjust the baskets. They are not insolent, they are simply indifferent to your existence.

I cannot quite understand it. People as worthy of honour and respect as the Jamaican peasant are in other countries taught that they must conform for the sake of the general good or the general comfort; and they conform without regarding such rules as any infringement upon their rights or their dignity. 'Surely the honourable member for somewhere might suggest a basket car or something of the same kind without feeling that he was leading his people into slavery again? One hears

that such was attempted once, but that the outcry was too great, and the idea had to be abandoned. Still, greater reforms than that have been effected against the will of the people without incurring the fall of a nation. I should think the honourable member for somewhere might take it up and yet have a few friends, new ones, perhaps, but certainly very grateful ones.

On the matter of the colour question one wishes that one might be allowed to return to earth to see the solution of it. The American cries relentlessly " no quarter," and well he may, for he is hard pressed. The evil which is upon him is one he has made for himself in an earlier generation. " The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." The grandfathers made it, and the grandchildren have got to face it.

One's heart is with one's own kind, there is no doubt of that; but when it comes to a question of seeing the truth, one's sympathy goes assuredly to the negro. He has never seen justice, he has never from the beginning of things, *had* justice. The white man took him out of his own land whether he liked it or not. He dragged him away to a white man's world; he beat him, robbed him of his freedom, stole the reward of his labour and violated his women. That was the negro's first knowledge of civilization. He learnt his lesson well, and repeated it correctly whenever his opportunity came. He lied and shirked and thieved and ravished as well as any white man; but not so successfully, because he was always under dog, and you must be top dog for a career like that if you mean to be a success.

The negro of to-day assaults a white woman and he is lynched by a foaming, raving populace. The white man of yesterday took *his* woman, used her and cast her

away, without suffering even a word of remonstrance. And one has got to remember that the preservation of chastity in his women is as much an instinct with the savage as with the white man. Whatever it may mean to-day, it came from no spiritual longing; it was simply male jealousy: it grew out of the desire of the male to *pre*serve and *con*serve for his own particular use. Virginity was something for him to violate; chastity afterwards, a proof of his supremacy.

The white man did that and more. He took the creatures he despised, and bred from his honourable body and their despicable ones a swarm of outcasts that he used as beasts of burden and sold into slavery again. And at the same time he demanded honour for himself while he treated as worthless that which he had of himself created. What use is it to say that some masters were kind and many slaves were worthless? The rot was going on all the time.

Then came the abolition of slavery and the beginning of chaos. Generations before, a primitive people had been torn out of their primitive world, set down in the midst of a world that they understood but vaguely, and were kicked and cuffed into subjection. Later, other generations were born *in* slavery with half the bone and blood of their savage and half of a conquering race. Suddenly, after long habit of submission they are told that they are free. Free to what? Free as a dog is free without a master; free as a menagerie lion is free that drops out of his cage into a village street? Nobody wants the dog; everybody is afraid of the lion. Like the mongrel dog the whole world is theirs, but nothing in it, except what they can get by stealth or strife; and not the strife of honourable war is theirs, but the strife of outdoing, of outwitting. Every man for himself they know to be their only chance.

If it were possible to ship them all back to their native forests again, they wouldn't go, or they wouldn't stay if they did go. They have tasted of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and they would rather sweat outside of Paradise than they would sit at ease inside as unconscious Adams. They have heard their Rag Times in the cafés, and the call of the rustling of trees is lost to their ears in the din of the band. And the forest isn't theirs any longer, even if they wanted it. It's Ours.

The semi-civilized negro of the towns is an unpleasant person. He is as much like the unpleasant white men of his station as a black cat is like a white one; and one dislikes him more because one has the feeling that he has less right to be unpleasant. He has proved in Haiti and Liberia that he is not able yet to govern himself; but to expect him to, at this stage of his development would be as reasonable as to leave a hungry urchin to look after a cake-shop and expect him not to touch the cake; or to set a little Whitechapel pickpocket to mind the till and hope to find the money in it when you returned. He has been taught to steal by seeing his master steal from him; there has not yet been time to unlearn him his ways and discover what he would do without his example. And also he is very hungry. One does not wonder at that. Yet even as one says that he cannot govern there comes before one the name of Toussaint l'Ouverture, the negro patriot of Haiti. Perhaps one swallow does not make a summer, but it hints at the possibility of a summer somewhere. And there are other swallows. Such names, taken at random as Dumas, Coleridge Taylor, Booker Washington of Tuskegee, and that scholar and artist, Burghart Du Bois, professor of philosophy of Atlantic University and author of *The Souls of Black Folk* and *The Quest*

of the Silver Fleece—such names must herald something of value, something to be reckoned with ?

An American in Panama said, after we had talked for a while, " It is all very well for you to be philosophical over it, but it isn't your problem and it *is* ours."

It is theirs just now, and I am glad it isn't ours, but it is going to be ours soon enough. For them it is the enemy clamouring at the door; for us it is the horseman riding in the distance. If you turn a family out of its house, unless it dies or finds another house to live in it is going to sit outside your gate and make a deuce of a row till you do something for it. The negro is not dying slowly and considerately like the American Indian; he is multiplying, particularly in America. In Jamaica he is growing very pale. It would be interesting to know if in the States they are increasing their difficulties by their very hatred of the trouble. The Jamaicans are intermarrying with the whites and not increasing abundantly; the American Indians are intermarrying with the mixed white races and are dying out; the Maoris of New Zealand have been doing the same and are dying out. The American negro is forced, because of the hatred of the white American to him, to marry his own kind, and is increasing. It seems like trying to put the fire out by blowing it.

HAITI

XVIII

HAITI

I HAVE been to Haiti.

It is not easy to find the exact thing that gives the "push off" to one's actions. Three days before I found myself on the way I read the following in the slip that is sent me every day from the cable office—

"Port-au-Prince, May 9. The Haitian Government have discovered proofs of a conspiracy which has been organized in the town of Aux Cayes by the partisans of General Antoine Simon, former President of Haiti, with the complicity of several foreigners.

"A large number of arrests have been made; among the persons captured being H. Pauleus Sannon, once Haitian Minister at Washington."

I read it and forgot it as quickly as I read it. Long before I had decided that Haiti was too difficult a place for a woman, who did not ride, to visit alone.

The next day I went down to town to buy pink ribbon and tooth-powder. By the time I got home again I had everything but my ticket and my passport for Haiti. Something quite suddenly, in the middle of the pink ribbon, touched a spring. For the life of me, try as I will, I cannot think what it was, but it bundled me into a cab and sent me circulating round between the Colonial Secretary, the Haitian Consul, and the Steam-

ship Company until I had gathered all the information I could. Then I went into the hills for the week-end, and on Monday I took my ticket.

It is not possible to get your ticket without first having your passport. I drove back to the consular office. The Consul, a tall, fine-looking Haitian mulatto, clean-shaven, and with crisp hair grey at the temples, received me courteously. He was a doctor by profession and had taken his degree at Edinburgh and walked St. Bartholomew's Hospital. When I went into the office he was sitting at a table covered with papers; a fiercely moustached gentleman sat opposite. The doctor rose and shook hands, then, having introduced me to the gentleman with the moustaches, he went on to the matter of the passport. The moustached one listened interestedly as we talked.

"Vous parlez français, madame?" he asked as he handed the paper across the table for me to sign.

I shook my head. He turned quickly to the Consul. "Elle a une jolie langue," he said and for a moment or two under cover of my ignorance, made a rapid catalogue of my values. I listened not unhappily. One may not have the wit to speak a tongue but it is not always denied one to understand it. When I was quite sure that he had nothing more to say I interrupted him.

"And for the passport——?" I played with the clasp of my purse.

"The cost of the passport is two dollars," said the Consul, "but——"

Moustaches took up the sentence and finished it in his own way. But for my indisputable attractiveness the passport *would* have cost two dollars. As it was—here his hands described such circles as said eloquently that no true Haitian would dream of allowing enchant-

ment like mine to open the gate of hospitality with an entrance fee. The hands folded themselves upon the waistcoat, the head bent low over the table: the honour belonged to him and to Haiti. Madame, in the name of my beloved country I ask you to step in.

I put away my purse with a sigh of content. Two dollars might be two dollars, but it was not that. For the first time in my life my beauty had been worth eight shillings. I had waited a good many years for the acknowledgment, but it was none the less gratifying because it came late.

The Consul smiled quietly. I am not sure that the sentence he had begun had been finished for him quite in the way he would have finished it himself, but there was no harm done, it might stay at that.

The ship sailed next day at two o'clock. Everything was hot, sweltering confusion. On the lower deck, black, brown, café au lait, and pale olive, stood about among trunks and baggage, with babies and bundles in their arms and other babies sheltering in their skirts. Chains rattled and jangled as the cranes swung rope-netted cargoes of freight into the gaping mouth of the hold, and frightened mules stalled near by, kicked and reared in their boxes. Every now and then a harassed agent would pass hurriedly along the deck on his way to or from the bridge or the purser's room, besieged as he went by importunate questions, answering patiently or impatiently as his goaded spirit let him. It would be difficult not to be stupid on such an embarkation as that, and it would be impossible not to be driven to madness by the one hundred and ninetieth question of the eighty-seventh embarker, bewildered to imbecility by the racket and the din and the newness of the situation. As a traveller I would always ask the agent what I wanted to know, and as an agent I would kill with my

knife and cut in small pieces the body of every traveller who wanted to know.

We went into the little white panelled music-room adjoining the smoking-room on the upper deck to say farewells. The German boys who live in the house saw to it that I had chocolates and eau de cologne. The one who gave me the cologne also gave me a copy of *Good Bye*. I think he thought I would be killed shortly after I arrived. It seemed extravagant of him to have given me such a large bottle at that rate: but he is of that generous type to whom nothing is too good for the one whom he pleases to honour. And far be it from me to depress trade by suggesting economy to those who have a predilection for me and an interest in my comforts.

The Consul was on board to look after his people. He came up, wished me a good voyage and presented me with two letters of introduction; one to General Défly, Commandant la Garde du Gouvernment, and the other to M. Léger, Ministre des affaires étrangers, recommending "toute spécialement Mdlle. Winifred James, une personne distinguée de Londres, et auteur de plusieurs livres, qui fait une voyage de plaisir en Haiti." I don't know how or why it is, but things written about oneself in French look twice as valuable as they do in English.

Monsieur of the moustaches was also there—in deepest mourning. He saw me as I was coming up the companion way and waited at the top to greet me. We talked for a moment or two politely.

"You are a Haitian, monsieur?" I asked, for something to say.

He twirled his moustaches furiously and looked down his nose.

"But yes, madame, I am truly a Haitian," he stroked

his shiny broadcloth delightedly, "and also I am a widower since three weeks!"

All attempt at a proper manner of condolence went out of my mind as I looked into his face. He was a Haitian and a widower. It was no case for condolence.

* * * * * *

We rolled—oh how we rolled! The ship had been built semi-flat bottomed to navigate certain shallow rivers, and we who had to use her for deep-sea crossings paid the price of her cleverness in evading mud banks that never threatened us. She took the angle of forty-five as her base and made all her movements from that. I used to sit on deck at night and watch the man in the crow's nest, wondering what he felt like when he came down to his feet and comparative security again. To perch on the side of a mast and every now and then to be able to trail your fingers in the water without inconveniently stretching—it must be an experience.

As for me, I am still reminiscent of the fine blues and crimsons with yellow edges that decorated my body after three nights in my bunk. On one side I carry a pattern of zebra stripes where I struck the wood panelling on the left; and on the other a scroll-like design from the nickel rail that spitted me on the right. I began by holding on to the rail, but after a while I let go: holding on was worse than being branded.

There was no other woman among the saloon passengers. At my table sat—beside the officers, who were all Germans—an American, a Dane, a Frenchman, a German and a Cuban. They all spoke some English, even the American, who spoke it quite well. Two of the officers buried themselves in beer and sauerkrout, but the purser, on my right, was affable and attentive. On the other side of me sat the Dane, a gentle person with a fair moustache, bound for San Juan, in Porto

Rica, and next to him came the Cuban, young, too fat for his years, but with a certain beauty: clear ivory skin, a perfectly cut mouth and dark eyes as guileless as a child's and as plaintive as an animal's. He had thick short black hair so grey that it looked as if it had been powdered: the contrast of the child's face and the grey hair was odd. I heard him telling the Dane, who offered him a cigarette, that he was in the tobacco trade and never smoked.

Opposite sat the Frenchman, the American and the German. If I know signs, the German would not last very long in the tropics. His mouth was weak and loose and his skin looked full of alcohol. The Frenchman, a Parisian, in the Bank of Haiti, was like one of the effeminate Christs of the old masters. A pale face, soft appealing eyes with dark lashes, red lips like a young girl's and the awful square beard of silky uncut hair that is so beloved of the Parisian. To talk with, he was pleasant, detached, philosophic: I should say he could discuss the classics better than he could tuck the rug round you.

Of them all the American looked most like a man. He was dressed like the American who does not wear bull-dog toes and the Englishman who does not hitch his trousers up to his neck. It is said that the best English spoken is that which does not tell you where a man comes from. The best-dressed man is the man whose clothes do not label him as belonging to any nationality, but who gives one the subconscious conviction that if his tailor lives anywhere it is in Savile Row.

So the American looked, and but for the fact that you could never take him for anything else you would not know him to be an American. Of average height, fair, clean-shaven, straight-limbed, with not an ounce

too much flesh anywhere; keen-faced, as controlled as the Englishman without his frigidity, he made me think of a piece of cold shining steel, but steel with a sense of humour. We sat talking in the deserted smoking-room till past midnight. I would not put my powers of endurance to the test of dining downstairs, and he having strained his to breaking point before he left Kingston was not dining at all. I sat clinging on to the table before me with a biscuit in my lap and a little bottle of dry champagne in the bucket on the floor, listening; while he held on to the table on the opposite side and told me things that I wanted to know. Of the manners and customs of the Haitians he had a good deal to say, but when it came to politics he grew dumb. Emphatically he said they were things he kept out of. I discovered after a little while in Haiti that he was at that time very busy keeping out of them because at an earlier period he had been equally busy mixing up in them. There is something not unnatural in the detachment of a gentleman in this administration who was part owner of a gunboat in the last.

With the experience I have gained I am playing a new game since I came back to London. It is called "Find the Buccaneer." When you know you do not bother to look at any one who is not immaculately dressed and has not a bland and disarming countenance. There are others, of course, but you have no need to look for the thing which declares itself.

HAITI

XIX

HAITI

NEXT morning at sunrise we were in the harbour at Jeremie, the first port of call from Kingston and one of the principal towns in Haiti. In the distance across the still blue water it looked reassuring. Sheltering under the great mountains, like little children clinging to the skirts of a mother, richly wooded hills crowded down to the sea. On the edge of the water sat the town, a cluster of grey and yellow buildings with red roofs; and further up the slopes fine towered houses hiding away among the trees gave an air of domesticity and comfort. One always thinks of Haiti as a place of rack and sword and fire; it is difficult to believe that there could be time from the stress in which to eat honey for breakfast and count the family washing. Yet in the distance it certainly was much more suggestive of honey for breakfast than fire and sword.

One thing at first puzzled me with regard to the town. There was that difference between the houses in Jeremie and all other houses I had seen that there is between a face that is blind and one that isn't. The reason of it is that there is no glass in the windows. Then I learnt that on the whole island there are only two houses with glass in them. If you have ever seen a wax doll with its eyes poked in you know exactly what the place looked like.

Because of the revolution at Aux Cayes having been fermented in Kingston, that nearest refuge for all who have to flee their own country, no one who was not actually bound for Jeremie was allowed to land. The purser, who had offered to take us ashore, came up apologetically and told me, but promised to see what he could do in the matter when he went to the office of the Company. I spent the morning looking over the side at two sharks that were swimming round the ship, and watching the coffee barges being poled across and unloaded into the hold. Haitian coffee, said the German that morning at breakfast, was the finest coffee in the world. He looked round the table with the air of one saying "contradict me if you dare."

"This is very good," I said looking down into an empty cup that had given me much pleasure in the time of its fullness.

"Not fit to drink," said the German, contemptuously. The purser was not there.

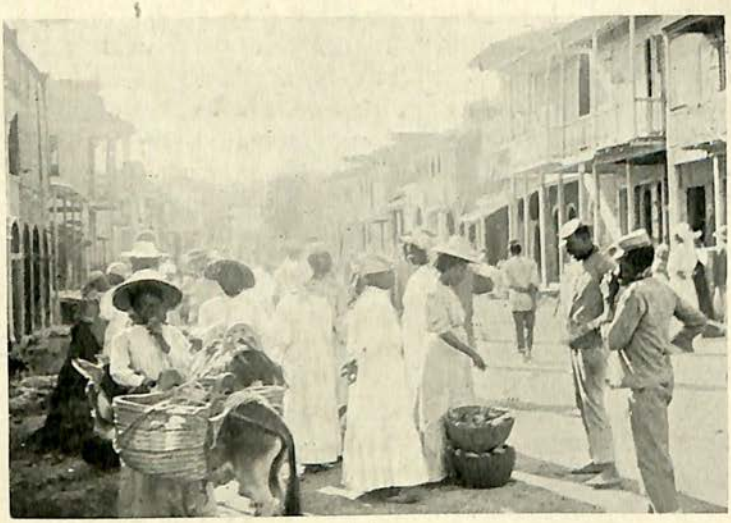
"Where do you get your coffee?" I asked of him after breakfast.

"From Haiti," he said, "it iss fery goot coffee, that of Haiti."

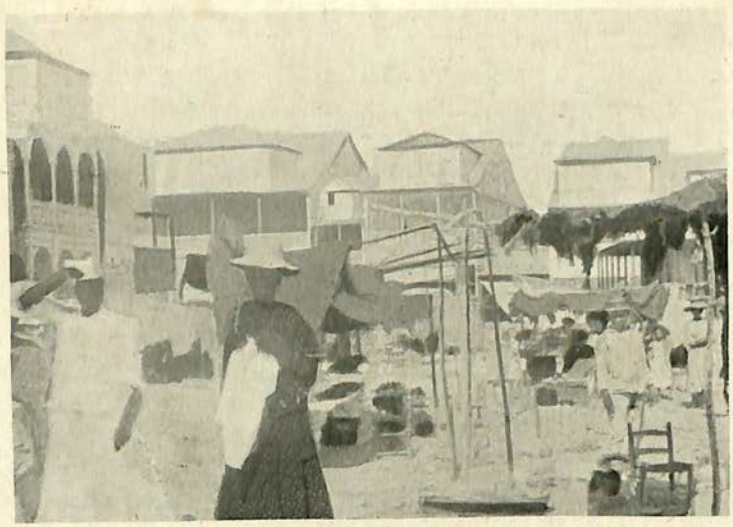
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About two o'clock the purser returned triumphant with a special permit in his pocket. We got into the row-boat and made our way to the shore.

From across the bay the little town looked inviting. But at close quarters—! A wharf through the gaps of which you were invited to break your leg with every step you took; a long unpaved street with open stagnant gutters in which dabbled pigs and chickens and children all together: women squatting on chairs that bridged the gutters or sitting beside them with open baskets of foodstuffs poised on the brink and ready to slip in



STREET SCENE, PORT-AU-PRINCE



MARKET-PLACE, JEREMIE

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with the first shove; mangy little curs lying palpitating with heat under the ramshackle verandahs; and dirt everywhere.

As we walked up the middle of the road picking our way among the refuse, the sun blazing down on our heads, a woman's hat fell into the gutter. She did not see it until it was well soaked. Stretching out her hand and smiling with a gentle pleasure at retrieving it without having to move from her chair, she shook the water from it and put it back on her head again. That she had shaken it over the basket did not seem to matter.

We did not stay longer in the town than it took to walk through the street and into the market square. A great open place of grey dust and sweltering sun, countless stalls filled with rubbish and sheltered from the sun with ragged coverings held up by sticks, a surge of drab-coloured men and women and children and donkeys, a big cathedral standing aloof like an indifferent turnkey; and a bandstand. We threaded our way between the stalls and stopped for a moment under a ragged little tree by the roadside. Opposite, on the verandah of an untidy-looking building, some soldiers were lounging. One saw me levelling my camera and immediately he stiffened up, propped himself on his gun and pointed to himself delightedly. After a cocktail in the agent's garden under some shady trees we went to the wharf, called the boatmen and rowed back to the ship. She seemed, after the heat and the glare and the dirt, a very nice old nurse to run home to.

In sea-travelling when there is much calling at ports, one learns to feel more grateful for a wharf at which the ships can dock, than for any other luxury that offers itself. To lie out in the bay, to be at the mercy of wind and weather and boatmen who quarrel furiously among

themselves and rob you, makes pleasure an exhausting pursuit. The wharf at Port-au-Prince looked quite a mile long in the ever-blazing sun, but still you could step off the boat directly on to it. Having discovered that, I gave up worrying about getting ashore and stood watching the crowd that had come to meet us.

The Haitian is a Frenchman coloured black, brown, or olive, as the case may be. He is built like the Frenchman, wears his hair like the Frenchman, and takes his fashions direct from Paris. The foreigners, Americans and Germans, adapt themselves to the climate by wearing linen or khaki, but the Haitian seems to be faithful always to his skin-tight broadcloth and his bowler hat. Perhaps now and then the bowler would be varied by a panama, but only now and then. The American, cool, exquisite, in white linen with silk shirt, buckskin shoes, and straw hat, came up beside me, and for my benefit, picked out some of the celebrities and described them. That man with the dark green coat and the panama hat with the huge crape bow was the chief of the Port. That little old gentleman with the grey imperial had been many times imprisoned for political reasons; and this, a quiet, reserved-looking person, with rather sad eyes; he was the man who had made Pétionville, or La Coupe, as it used to be called, so safe from thieves that you might leave your jewels on the roadside and find them there untouched the next morning. Pétionville, five miles along the road through the hills, was once at the mercy of every rogue who passed by it. Now, thanks to the Chief of Police, not even bolts were wanted for the doors. His methods? The suspected man, when caught, was brought before the chief, questioned courteously upon the subject of his misdemeanour, set free, and shot in the back as he walked away. This rather broke the nerve of those who looked on, and in time

there was very little shooting to be got at La Coupe. But for a while, according to the American, the sport was hot, and, for convenience, the Chief of Police had his own private burial ground close to. From what I heard afterwards the American had not used any unnatural colours for the painting of his picture. I watched the quiet man with the sad eyes curiously. There was something very dignified in the figure that stood there. He was dressed in correct grey morning suit and a bowler hat, and evidently he had been riding, for he wore leather riding gloves and carried a whip; and there were spurs on his boots. He seemed to stand just a little aloof, but he answered courteously as the different people greeted him. His manners seemed easy, unconscious, charming. And his methods—— ?

A gay little lady, in the very height of fashion, and looking like a tiny French fashion plate, came up with her husband and greeted the American effusively. I was introduced, and we all walked up the long, long pier together to the Bureau du Port at the other end. We must be examined before we could be allowed to go through.

Standing alone, upon an unpaved, uncultivated, open bit of ground close to the wharf, is the Bureau du Port, a little tawdry building with an open front. At the entrance a sailor is stationed with a bayonet, stopping the way. You go up a few steps on to a sort of roofed-in platform. In the middle of the platform, in a position of high honour, stands a cardboard and paint model of a ship that looks as if it might have been made by an old sailor at Wapping. On the floor is a gaudy tapestry square. I make for a dusty velvet and gold arm-chair and sit down to watch proceedings. There is a lot of dust, a lot of noise and nothing very much happening.

The American talks blandly awhile with the Chief of the Port, and finally opens his dispatch-case and turns his papers out upon the table with a smile and an air that says, " Look for yourself if you won't believe me." It is true that he has come from Jamaica after a journey over to buy mules, and that all conspiracies that are not born at the Cap are said to be hatched in Kingston, but the Chief of the Port seems to show an amount of interest, rather overwhelming in the face of the American's statement that he assiduously keeps his fingers out of politics.

Having satisfied the chief about his affairs, my friend comes towards me and breaks the news to me about my own. Not all his blandishments will get my trunk for me until to-morrow. It is Ascension Day. I may rage and storm and weep and plead as I like, but it will make no difference. None but an imbecile would *ask* to have her trunk on Ascension Day. I crawl moaning into the carriage of the chic little Haïtienne and allow myself to be driven to the hotel that has been chosen for me.

HAITI

XX

HAITI

THE insects in this part of the world make life a hell of self-consciousness to me. Whenever I leave a place, a contingent of mosquitoes conducts me to the wharf or the train, bites me a hearty good-bye, and when I am well away goes off and telegraphs to its friends to meet me on the other side. If I sit down for one moment out of doors, or on verandahs, they crowd around my head like the cupids of a drawing-room mezzotint, fawn about my ankles like a lot of spaniels, and cover my hands with their most damnable caresses. Citronella, which is sold as certain immunity from their attentions, only serves in my case to excite them. I might just as well offer cocktails to dipsomaniacs. My arms are even as the arms of Job and my legs are like unto my arms, while to me is denied the comfort which was his. We live in an artificial and self-conscious age, and suffer as I have to, it is not allowed me to retire into corners and give myself up to ecstatic anguishes with the potsherd that was his never-failing joy and solace. There is something desperately enraging in the sight of people lounging serenely about, indulging placidly in an unbitten conversation while you sit agonizing like a pot of honey in a gardenful of wasps. You may tell yourself that the others are not fit for a self-respecting mosquito to bite, but no balm comes from the assurance to anoint

your poison-laden skin. I have heard that a judicious mixture of goose-grease and kerosene oil put on fairly lavishly all over the body will keep them away, but as it would keep every one else away at the same time, and I am gregariously inclined, I must try and do without it.

The hotel to which I have come, is the head-quarters of the men who are in Haiti for the making of the railway from Port-au-Prince to Cap Haitien. Every day some of them ride in from the construction camps. The short, roundabout little woman, with the determination of a general, who runs the hotel, is " mother " to them all. Her husband, a gaunt, lean Texan, with a fine fund of stories and oaths, is the Cap'n; and the son, a slender stripling of about seventeen, the Kid. The Kid is employed on the railway, the Cap'n looks after the " farm "—about which one knows nothing but that he rides into it early in the morning and back from it early in the evening—and mother takes care of the hotel, which means cooking all the meals, ordering all the servants, buying all the foodstuffs, greeting all the visitors and listening to everything that every one has to tell her. The visible staff consists of two coloured waiters, one named Deus, whose coffee-hued face is set in a tender and ineradicable smile from dawn till dusk; Dufort, a fiercely moustached barman, who is a dark horse for politics, and Louise, the Jamaican chambermaid, who goes about her work all day with a little shadow creeping softly along behind her. The little shadow is Concepçion, her seven-year-old pickney. She makes no trouble and needs no amusing, but just pads silently about on her little bare feet, neither to the right nor the left of her mother, but exactly behind. In and out of the bedrooms, around the galleries and up and down the stairs she goes in the manner of an absurd duckling behind the mother duck. They neither

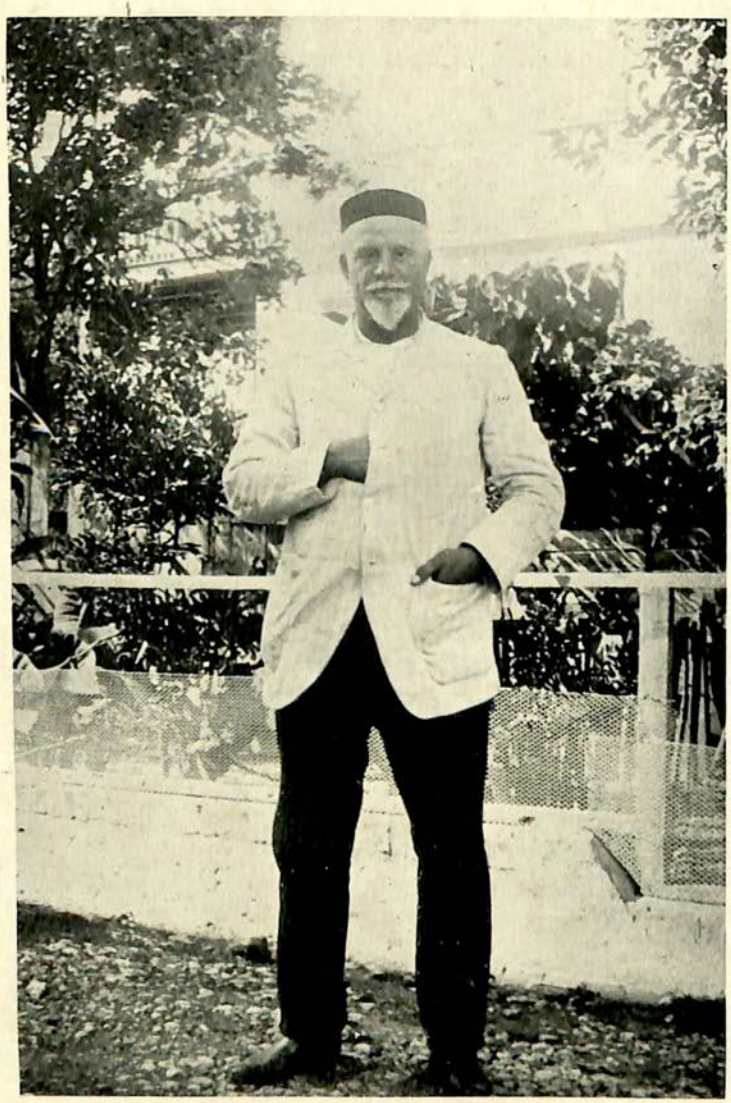
of them seem to take any notice of each other, yet to think of the one without the other would be to imagine but half of a human being. If I speak to her, little Concepçion smiles faintly, but does not answer. Once I had a talk with Louise and she was more communicative. She told me breathlessly of *loup-garou* who steals the children; of duppies, those souls of the dead that come back in dreadful shapes to terrify. You must not whistle at night for fear the duppies catch your voice. There was once a wicked creature who after nightfall got out of his skin and went prowling about—frightening people. And while he was away some one went into his house and stole his skin and nailed his house up. He came back and tried to get in but he couldn't, and he had to climb up into a tree and hide there. He kept on calling out for them to give him his skin, but they would not, and they burnt it instead. At last he died in the tree because he had no house and no skin to go back to. There was a true story for you! I saw little Concepçion being fed on things such as these, and did not wonder that she always walked close behind Louise. If a duppy tried to get her she would just have to scream and clutch her mother's dress to be safe. But without such precautions——!

In the dining-room gather men of all sorts and kinds. All the morning there sits on the verandah a large, pale-coloured American of apparently mixed nationalities, who is agent there for one of the big American Trusts. He seems to do no work, and if he has an office he certainly does not trouble it very much. He just sits there limp, lethargic, apathetic, with his linen coat unbuttoned and his collar hanging over the back of his chair: when the lunch bell rings he fastens on his collar, gets up with a slightly less apathetic air,

and steers his course for the table. Later on he appears upon the verandah again, and sits there till dinner. The mosquitoes never even nod to him. He was at first quite affable to me, but for some reason or other I have lost favour and his hand is very much against me. He looks haughty if I come on to the verandah, and has been known to make bitter, half audible, remarks about me that I cannot catch the gist of.

For me there is very little to do, and after lunch I go up to my room and make the *siesta* inside the mosquito curtains, which being rather old, I have to fix up as best I can with pleats and hairpins. I have abandoned citronella long ago, after what nearly was a tragedy. Mother, in a great pity for the onslaughts I had to endure, made her bottle over to me. I anointed myself freely and later on went up to my room. In the Haitian house, as I said before, there are no glass windows, only great wooden shutters that you keep open wide, if it is fine, and tightly closed if it is raining. I went to my room after the anointing; and almost immediately, through the wide open shutters, swarmed a hundred bees. I fled inside the net holding my hands to my face, the bees buzzing excitedly round. Once inside I tucked the net up tightly and pinned the holes together as fast as I could. For a long time it was a siege, but at last they got tired of battling round the curtains and went away. I crept out, closed the shutters and scrubbed off the cause of my popularity. I would rather have mosquito bites without citronella than bee bites with.

All the afternoon the verandah is empty except for a very occasional straggler. Then as the day grows less fierce, and the sun drops behind the square roof of the hotel, the chickens come home one by one to roost. There is the old Haitian Senator, a



A FINE OLD HAITIAN GENTLEMAN

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fine upstanding figure over six feet high, with crisp white hair and deep olive complexion. His bearing is dignified, his voice gentle, and he has a courteous word in French or English for any one who speaks to him. The serenity of his face is remarkable when one thinks of the life that lies behind—and who knows ?—perhaps before him. This man of sixty, with the bearing of an aristocrat, is a product of a semi-civilized country and has spent many years of his life imprisoned with his feet chained and balled, in what used to be one of the most filthy pesthouses of a most filthy town. There is nothing hunted or haunted about him, he has the air of one long used in ruling, and in ruling kindly. Next comes a round, fresh-faced American, who is in Port-au-Prince for a day or two from Gonaives. Gonaives is up the coast on the way to Cap Haitien, and is one of the construction camps for the Macdonald railway. The railway man comes in fresh and rosy after a bath, looking like a very nice, good-natured comedian. On his heels follow two long, lean boys, with long, straight, black hair, and U.S.A. written all over them. They proceed to put on baseball gloves and for half-an-hour the lawn in front of the house is like a raging battle ground. Outside in the lane (this is a quiet quarter well away from the town) children peer through the pickets of the fence and squeak delightedly when a ball is caught that just missed whacking the catcher's head off.

There is a scatter through the open gates, and another American, middle-sized, square built, and full of energy, dashes up to the bar door and jumps off his pony. This is one who has constituted himself my guardian, and very glad I am to have him. He took me under his wing at meals and made things very much nicer than they would have been if I had had to find my way about always by myself. And through him I learnt of much

that was going on. Looking at everything all round I would much rather be a woman than a man, but being a woman makes things difficult at times. Not in all professions is it taken as a matter of course that all students shall have the right to study their profession from exactly the same angle, irrespective of sex. When I am busy being a woman there is no woman more ready to take every advantage of her position than I, but when I am in the operating theatre no one shall bandage my eyes. Very quickly men recognize this—the nice ones—and courteously open the doors for me. But I think it might save time a little if I were to have my creed written upon me in large letters so that all who walk behind may read. I will have it done in white letters on a black ground, and it shall be let in to the back breadth of my blouses and coats for day wear. And in the evening I will have a design done in electric lights, so infinitesimal that they look like jewels which will change to red, white and green as I talk, "I AM THE CAT THAT WALKS BY HIMSELF AND ALL PLACES ARE ALIKE TO ME." That as a pendant would be rather decorative and as an article of faith quite definite. I think it is really a better idea even than I thought it was when I began to say it.

And it all has nothing whatever to do with the American I was speaking of. He comes through the bar, throws himself into a chair at the big round table on the verandah, and heaves a sigh of weariness and relief. He has to do with the store, and to-day the teams have come in from the camps and the wagons have had to be provisioned: it has been a heavy day. A slip of a youngster in khaki riding kit, and a Stetson hat, takes another chair. He looks little more than a curly-haired, blue-eyed baby, but he is the doctor for the Company, has a wife and two children somewhere

in the States, and works hard at keeping the "boys" fit. Fever is the chief trouble, although ordinarily there is very little of it in Haiti. But men without women to worry them are such utter fools; they say patronizingly and pityingly when a woman does something foolish along her own lines, "just like a woman," and along their own they go on doing other things that the most senseless scatter-brained woman would have the wits to be ashamed of. It is a man's fool-trick to do everything that will bring disaster and then to stagger heroically about his work with an obstinate courage that has neither wit nor wisdom anywhere near it. One admits that they are absolutely indispensable, but in all the world there is nothing so stupid as they are when they are stupid. I wish I didn't feel things so poignantly; it always gets me away from the subject.

The Cap'n rides up, a gaunt, drooping Don Quixote figure in khaki and a sombrero, his long legs stuck into Mexican stirrups, his pony ridiculously small beneath him. He comes towards the table.

"Seen the Kid?" he asks laconically, and as he asks the Kid walks in and takes the only vacant chair. He has just ridden in from camp and looks pretty well spent. His mother watches him gravely. Some one calls for the dice box, the dice box that decides the victim many times a day for cocktails and "highballs," as the Americans always call our single whisky-and-soda. The Kid shakes first and as he shakes deals out the latest news from the camp. There is a woman there now and they are living on velvet: dishes and double sheets and real napkins! The Kid clicks his lips reminiscently.

We all throw in turn and my luck, which out of Haiti has never been known to stand by me once in

a game of chance, is unbroken. The call is highest number of sixes. I throw them all, three times. Next time it is aces. I throw four and the next throws one. Nothing can come near me. The man beside me rubs the box on my sleeve superstitiously before he throws. It brings him nothing; he hands the box to me for a final throw and I corner the aces again. "Well, I'm *darned!*" he says looking at me as if I were something not quite canny. I take my honours modestly, but with a quiet dignity as if I had spent my life throwing aces. The loser lifts a lusty voice and calls "Dufort!" And Dufort, neither forgetting his present position of barman nor his possibly future one of President, stands by with dignity and takes the order for cocktails. One can see he is only biding his time.

At dinner my American tells me his news of the day. One of the boys has ridden in from camp so drunk that he can scarcely sit his horse. He is getting more drunk and has to ride back that night. My man has been asked to talk to him for his good, "but a mighty lot of use it is talking to him for his good as he is now," says the American indignantly. "If he gets home without breaking his neck he can think himself lucky." Over at another table sits a boy who was at lunch with me. He is sick with fever and has to go back to camp to-night by sea. He is in charge of the camp. My American is going to ride him down to the boat after dinner on his pony. "Poor kid," he says, "he's pretty sick and he's funking it a bit." I ask why, and he says there is trouble in the camp and he isn't sure that he is able to cope with it. I look at the boy and think of what he told me at lunch. He wants a college education and has no money to pay for it, so he has left school and come away down here to earn it. My heart aches when I think of him going out into the night

sick with fever, perhaps sick with fear, and with little or no experience of the game he has to play and the men he has got to handle. He looks like a child, and it is lonely work for a child. I am glad my American is going to see him off. It may hearten him up a little. It makes a lump come into my throat. I would like to keep him here, to put him into bed and cosset him till he is fit again. I cannot bear to think of him being afraid.

After dinner everybody goes out on to the verandah again and the dice box rattles unceasingly. In a corner the Cap'n sits with his long legs crossed, drawling out his oath-strewn tales of valour and hitting the table every now and then with a thump that sets the glasses jingling. With monotonous regularity Dufort comes out to put down full glasses and take away empty ones. As the night goes on the visitors drop away one by one and at last none but the residents are left. The light on the verandah is put out, the bar door locked and we drift away to our rooms. So ends a day of life in the Hotel. And so the days repeat themselves.

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

XXI

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

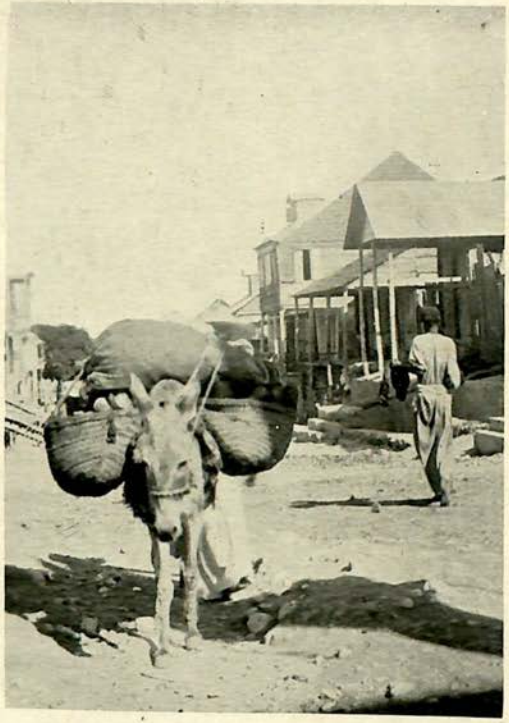
I WENT over to Haiti to satisfy my curiosity. I had no desire to read the book, I only wanted to look at the pictures. One travels for fun—at least I do—and not to gather statistics. I want to see what other places are like and how other people live. If one sees two and two on the blackboard one sometimes cannot resist stopping to make it four, but it is not wise to do it always and it is *always* safe to write " looks like " before the four : then no one can get you.

I wanted to see what the capital of a black man's town would be like under the rule of black men who had been brought up by a western civilization. Twenty-four hours in Port-au-Prince would have given me all I wanted. As it was I had to spend seven days there and seven days on the high seas before I finally reached Kingston again. In an ordinary way it takes no more that forty-eight hours from Jamaica to Port-au-Prince allowing for Jeremie on the way, but the ship on which I was returning suddenly received orders to go up to the Cap. Another vessel of the same line had gone on a sandbank in the bay, and we had to get her off. It took me seventeen days to pay for my inquisitiveness.

Port-au-Prince, which in the time of the French was called the Little Paris, is just a repetition of Jeremie upon a larger scale with half-a-dozen comparatively

fine buildings among the débris of the town. A hasty attempt had been made just before I arrived to tidy up for the visit of Philander Knox, and a certain part of the road by the wharves had been well paved; but nothing very extensive could be done in the time. Most of the streets—which are not streets, but dried hummocky watercourses—were fairly clean and there is a brand-new and not yet finished cathedral. For the rest the place was like a desolate and untidy lumber-yard with a ragged population, whose national anthem sung insistently is "gimme fi' cents;" or fifty, according to the American they picked up. Before the advent of President Leconte, the streets, I am told, were filthy; the soldiers had no barracks, no pay, and no boots. Unfed and unclothed, they slept out in the streets or on verandahs and begged from whoever would give to them. Spencer St. John in his book called *Haiti, or the Black Republic,* describes the army thus: "A more motley sight can scarcely be imagined than a full regiment marching past. Half the men are in coats wanting an arm, a tail or a collar, with a broken shako, a straw or round hat, a wideawake or merely a handherchief tied over the head: officers carrying their swords in their right or left hand according to caprice; the men marching in waving lines holding their muskets in every variety of position; while the brilliant staff, in all the uniforms known to the French army, gallops by. President Geffrard used to look on with a smile of satisfaction on his face and gravely ask you if there were any finer troops in the world."

This testimony of Spencer St. John's, made some thirty or forty years ago I think, agrees very well with what Hesketh Pritchard says in his very much later little book *Where Black Rules White,* and with what several private individuals who have lived for



IN THE TOWN, PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI



A CALVARY, PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI

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some time in the Republic told me personally. In the short time of his office (he had not been "on the throne" a year when I was there in May of 1912) Leconte made the streets fit to walk in, fed and clothed the soldiers, gave them their pay of fifty cents (Haitian currency) a week, provided them with temporary barracks and had started to build permanent ones. I was taken over those in use and no quarters could need to be cleaner, or better kept. The detractors of Leconte when I spoke in Haiti of his reforms shrugged their shoulders. They said his cleaning up of the town was only a continuation of the plans of the late President Simon, and as far as his treatment of the soldiers was concerned, the better the army the safer his seat. But that doesn't seem quite fair. Every ruler has not taken up the obligations of his predecessor, and it is obvious that if an army is going to benefit for the purpose of keeping one man in his chair the greater good is happening to the greater number, and it is profitable that that man should stay where he is. It sounds better that an army should profit than none at all, which last condition seems to have been pretty well the rule under most régimes if one could judge even ever so little by appearances.

I had an interview with the President and a very long talk with Mons. Léger, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of Simon was negro, that of Leconte mulatto. Mons. Léger, who is a very delightful person to talk with, gave me his book upon Haiti.[1] In it he argues that in her development Haiti is no more barbarous than either France or England were in theirs, and he instances as parallels Louis XVI and Charles I. Those are rather facers when you come to think of it.

[1] *Haïti : son histoire et ses detracteurs.*

THE MULBERRY TREE

When one speaks of Vaudoux worship the patriotic Haitian who wishes his country to appear as civilized as possible waves a dismissal with his hands and smiles deprecatingly in a way that says "a thing of the past, my dear madam; you must not allow yourself to be fooled by yellow press stories." But that is not the general feeling, and a man who has lived there for eleven years told me that he himself had seen it. No one except the historic priest who nearly lost his life through it, is ever supposed to have seen the supreme rites, the sacrifice of the "goat without horns," but others by hiding themselves have seen the lesser sacrifices, those of the cock or the black goat. It seems rather futile of them to attempt to try and prove that Vaudoux worship has been put down, when even in Jamaica, an English colony under white governance, it has not been possible to quite get rid of the comparatively mild Obeah man. The African, like most other ritualists, does not part with his ritual easily.

But there was while I was thinking over Vaudoux worship a parallel that flashed suddenly through my brain, and took my breath away. Vaudoux rites are in detail ghastly. They are barbarous, obscene, unspeakable. The sacrifice of the goat without horns, the supreme sacrifice, is, to be no more descriptive than is necessary, the killing of a young child. The rites are of course performed for a purpose, the purpose of bringing about something that is greatly desired. We who are of a civilized race regard it as a horror beyond our comprehension altogether. Yet we read quite calmly the twenty-second chapter of Genesis. No more than a parable, you say; but a horrible parable at that. If we want to feel properly indignant against the heathen we would do well to cut it out of our book of laws.

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

The policeman in Haiti seems to be a fairly supreme being. Armed with a cocomacaque he goes about administering justice, or rather, punishment, as he feels inclined. The cocomacaque is a short thick stick like a closely ringed piece of bamboo, but heavily shod with iron and capable of felling a man at a blow. My American described a scene he had witnessed when he was at the camp at Cap Haitien. A thief had been caught and was in the hands of some policemen. They set upon him and beat him to death in a few minutes. In no more than ten a hastily-dug-out hole was made and the poor wretch stamped into it. The American said, "It made me sick, but I had to watch till the end."

The grim accounts of Spencer St. John and Hesketh Pritchard made me anxious to see the prison and the Military Hospital. I asked Mons. Léger if it would be possible, and he said he would arrange it for me. The time went on, but no orders arrived. The day before my boat sailed I went down to the Cinq Ministres where the business of State is carried on. Mons. Léger was on duty at the Palace, but I saw Mons. Thoby, his secretary. Mons. Thoby was very sorry, but he was afraid it was too late: there would not be time to procure the necessary passes. Would it be worth my while to try and get in without them? He regretted to say he thought not. That made me more than ever anxious to go. I said good-bye, got into my carriage and drove to the Military Hospital. Through the open doors of a large two-storey building I saw a Sister of Mercy cleaning some instruments. I walked in. On a dentist's table in the middle of the room was an unhappy looking tooth which had apparently just left its home. Through another door was a man, a mulatto I should think He came forward. I told him what I wanted, and

very courteously he offered to take me round the wards. It was Dr. Paul Salomon, the head of the hospital. We left the house and walked through a sunshiny garden to some bungalows beyond. These were the wards; primitive buildings, but spotlessly clean, with polished floors, wide verandahs, and shutters full open to the air and the sun. Later on, said the Doctor, they hoped to have more modern buildings, but in the meantime they tried to make the best of what they had. Modern buildings might give them greater conveniences, but I could not see how in any way they could supply a better hygienic system than already obtained.

After that I drove to the gaol. I hardly expected to get in, but it was worth trying. The gate was open, a man stood with his bayonet set slantwise across the entrance. I walked up boldly and said I wished to go in. Was it permitted? He bowed, picked up the bayonet and made a way for us to pass. Inside another man came up, and when I told him what we wanted he turned immediately and led the way through.

I do not think there was any part we did not see: it may have been so, but I think not. The walls were not high and the sun shone down into the rough cobbled alleys and courtyards: the doors into the cells stood open. It might have been a clean poor quarter of an adobe town. Everything was swept and whitewashed. In a small courtyard a prisoner was busy cooking his dinner in a billy on a little fire of sticks. Through the open door of one cell four men were playing cards, and in another, one was entertaining a morning visitor. Knots of prisoners were talking together as we passed: they stopped to look at us, but they seemed only mildly interested and certainly they offered no affront. A few stretched out their hands in the usual "fi' cents" way, but they were not pressing. If I had to serve my time

anywhere I would rather do it in an adobe cell with the door wide open and the sun streaming into the alley way *and* some one to drop in and pass the time of day to me than in an up-to-date penitentiary, with walls to shut out the sun and doors to keep in the silence.

That both those institutions were as bad as have been described is evidently never denied. Three months afterwards I was talking with the Haitian Consul in Jamaica, and I said it was to be hoped that the President might be allowed to live long enough to carry his reforms through. The Consul said there was little fear of it being otherwise; the coming of the Panama Canal was teaching the Haitians that they could not do what they used to do. The disturbance at Aux Cayes in May?—he shrugged his shoulders; it was nothing worth speaking of: revolutions were in their death throes.

Three days after that the President was dead. The powder magazine under the Palace—the Presidents sit upon the powder for safety's sake—blows up at three o'clock in the morning and the President goes with it. In another country it might be no more than a coincidence, but in Haiti, where the national sport seems to be the setting up of images for the purpose of knocking them down, it has more the appearance of being a change of tactics brought about by the Panama Canal. The telegrams speak sorrowfully of the disaster, but one finds it difficult in such an instance to mourn with those that mourn. There is only one place for the tongue, and that is in the cheek.

It will be very interesting to watch the situation develop. With the activity of the United States in Central America the Haitian will have to mend his ways and settle his differences in another manner, or else he will find the constable's hand upon his shoulder. The

nurseries now are too near the drawing-room for the children to wrangle unheeded, and as soon as they cause any real discomfort to the grown-ups they will be dealt with effectively. Also, it is rumoured, Haiti has charms that the world will want to exploit. A sleeping beauty who has been guarded by a dragon for a hundred years is there, to be awakened by the kiss of commerce. If a prince of her own blood does not hurry up and marry her it is pretty certain that one of other blood will. She has the reputation of being too good a catch to remain hidden much longer: and princes go a-visiting more than they used to.

As I write two pictures come before me. A staircase in the Palace guarded by a slanted bayonet which lifts by magic as we approach; a slender young negro aide-de-camp with lithe body and quite beautiful face, as graceful in his spurred boots and dark uniform as ever he could be in his native dress: a bewildering reception-room with strawberry pink carpet and walls and chintz, from which we are led into a smaller room with Aubusson carpet and long gold French mirrors, which looks as if the Magasin du Louvre or the Printemps might have sent it all over as it stands from their fourth floor in Paris. My own representative in spotless white with helmet and sword and silver and gold lace conversing in excellent French with the two olive-skinned ladies in deep mourning who receive us in the Printemps Boudoir. And presently through one of the doors comes a spare figure with quick steps and shy, pleasant greeting. He is dressed in deep mourning also, for the wife whose ambition, they say, made him President, and who died four or five months after and left him to get through by himself. He wears shiny black broadcloth and the enormously long and narrow French boots with square

chopped-off toes affected by all the Haitian men of fashion. He has been educated in Germany and speaks English, but will not speak it to me, so we talk, he in French and I in English, and if the conversation gets too tangled the Consul steps in and interprets. He talks to me of books while I am trying to talk of Haiti. He has a little white beard upon his chin, two or three warts on his face, projecting teeth and kind eyes. He talks rather shyly but eagerly, and he laughs a good deal as he talks. After a while a butler appears with a salver and six glasses of warm sweet champagne—the Haitians don't care for ice. We all bow to him and each other solemnly and then drink. After a little more talk he rises, excuses himself, shakes hands in a sincere warm-hearted way, yet always a little shyly, and goes out through the door he came by. So, for me, disappeared Jean Jacques Dessalines Cincinnatus Leconte.

And the other picture. Ten o'clock on a hot starlit night in that dusty grass plain called the Champ de Mars in the middle of which sits the ornate little turreted grey-painted building called the Palace. I have walked down from the Hotel with a man who is in Haiti for the railroad construction, to get a breath of air. We drop down on to an iron seat by the roadway just a stone's throw from the Palace. It is dark but for the stars and a few flickering lamps in the distance. There is no sound but the croaking of the bullfrogs in the gutters that fringe the plain, and the monotonous and mournful cry passed on from sentry to sentry as they guard the Palace grounds; the " qui vi' " that the Haitian soldier calls as well in his sleep as out of it. The strange quiet punctuated by the sharp spasmodic cry and the desolate croaking of the bullfrogs, struck cold, and I shivered as if a goose were walking over my grave. The railway man picked up a pebble and threw it at a spectral-looking

cat sitting in the distance under the lamplight. He missed it and picked up another, then he looked across at the lighted windows of the Palace.

"They'll get him some day," he said, as he threw the second stone and hit the cat.

THE PURSER

XXII

THE PURSER

THE steamer that was to take me back from Haiti to Jamaica was two days late in sailing. I dawdled about up at the hotel waiting for news, ready to start at a moment's notice. It went on for two days. First she was to sail that day, then she wasn't. She would go at noon. Just as I was about to start a messenger arrived to say there was no truth in it; that she hadn't even been sighted. When at last she came in she had orders to go to the Cap to get the stranded steamer off. That meant perhaps a week before she would be back. I undid my box, wearily put the things about my room again, and got into a kimono to take a very-much-needed siesta under the mosquito nets.

Some time later in the afternoon I was awakened by a knock at my door. Deus stood without.

"The messenger—below," he said simply.

I ran out and looked over the gallery down into the hall. A man was waiting there. I called and he looked up.

"Mr. —— send me to tell you the ship is going," he said haltingly.

"When?" I asked.

"Now," he replied.

I looked at him aghast.

"But shall I have time——?" I stopped; he was not understanding, and I was wasting the moments.

I rushed back to my room, wildly sweeping my things off the dressing-table and stuffing them into the trunk. Then I began to dress. As I was pinning up my hair I heard the faint sound of a whistle blowing in the distance. It was my steamer. And if I missed it there was not another for a month. I had still to get a carriage. Deus came in without ceremony and marched off the trunk.

"A carriage quickly, Deus," I said tremblingly, sticking my hatpin through my finger as I groped with my hat.

Somehow or other I got off. The ramshackle carriage rattled and flopped away down the hill, across the Champ de Mars, and up and down the streets of the town to the wharf. There, standing mountainous out of the water, at the far, far end of the pier, was the steamer. In the blaze and glare of the sun she seemed to be scores of miles away. I fell out of the carriage and started to run, trusting to the man who had taken my trunk to follow. After I had gone some distance voices called me back. The trunk must first go to the Bureau du Port. No one spoke English, no one spoke French, and no one understood *anything*, I least of all. By some miracle the trunk was got out of the Customs. As I turned to make my frenzied way back across the waste ground to the pier I heard a great to-do behind me. It was another porter trying to tear my box off the shoulders of my man. And at the same moment far down the blazing pier the steamer whistled furiously

Then I did what I have never done in my life before. I beat a man. With the moments running away like sand through the hole of a pocket, I saw my hopes going. I would not have cared then if the whole Republic were my enemy; this wretch was stealing my

last desperate chance. I turned upon him and beat him, talking furiously in English, with a sob of rage and despair breaking my voice. I beat his shoulders. Stupefied, he let go of the trunk and faced me. His amazement made him unable to act. In that moment I and my man were off.

Calling to him to follow I made for the boat. Oh, that wharf! *And* the heat! One walked as in a nightmare, striving furiously yet never seeming to get any nearer. At last my feet touched the gangway. I was on. Up the steep side of the mountain I went to the deck above. At last!

I stepped, exhausted, into a knot of men standing at the head of the gangway. Then I turned to look for my box. The man was carrying it *down* the gangway on to the wharf again. The captain detached himself from the group.

"You must go back," he said pleasantly. "We are not taking any passengers on till we come back from the Cap."

I looked at him. Then I looked at the unending line of wharf that ran back through the blinding blue water to the shore. I thought of the pains I had gone through, of the man I had beaten. I had very little intelligence left, but one thing I knew; I was standing on boards that, if I did not desert them, would one day get me to Jamaica. I would never leave them again till I stepped off at Kingston.

This for some time I continued to tell the captain. Not aggressively nor with any desire to obstruct, but patiently, as one would say it to one who did not understand. The steamer could not go until it was settled. The captain looked at the chief, the chief looked at the captain; and the purser looked at them both. Then the captain smiled and went to the top of the gangway.

"Bring that box up," he shouted, and in a little while we were under weigh.

* * * * * *

I was leaning over the rail looking down at the "deckers." There is no steerage on these tropical boats, but a certain part of the lower deck is portioned off for passengers of the steerage class. There is no sleeping accommodation, but in such a climate that is little or no privation. An awning is spread to protect them from the heat in the day, and on some of the ships they are provided with coffee in the morning; for the rest they bring their own provisions.

As a rule they are nearly all West Indians. The West Indian negro has a passion for travelling. As soon as he can get together ten or twenty dollars he is off. You see streams of them getting on and off at every port. Up the gangways they file solemnly, one behind the other, carrying their bundles and their stretchers. The travelling kit of the decker is well worth seeing. A canvas stretcher on folding legs, a magnificent white-frilled cushion, a number of bursting brown-paper parcels and a kerosene tin. The kerosene tin down there is called the nigger's steamer trunk. On the journey they lie about inert, listless and unwashed. But on the day of arrival there is a great awakening. The parcels are undone, clean dresses and marvellous hats appear out of the brown-paper parcels. The ladies comb their wool vigorously, puffing it out in the very latest fashion, with twists and rolls and tortoiseshell combs, and powder their chocolate faces with all the thoroughness of a lady of style. None but the pinkest powder is ever used by them. I have seen them make their toilet in the full blaze of morning light, with no more thought than as if they were in the screened privacy of a jealously guarded bedchamber.

THE PURSER

This particular afternoon we were lying idle in the bay at Cap Haitian, while the lines were being fixed to the steamer that we had gone up to get off the sand-bank. I stood on the upper deck, looking down at the deckers. Three turkeys, one with sunstroke, stood waterless and dejected in the heat; a basketful of chickens fought furiously under the canvas lid that kept them in. Three yellow-skinned, black-haired women in whom the Spaniard predominated sat together in deck chairs on the awning-covered hatch; a mother perhaps, and two daughters; thin, like witches, and dressed in dusty black with high-heeled patent leather shoes and black lace stockings. They stared out listlessly before them, eternal cigarettes in their long claw-like hands. Near by sat a pleasant-looking negro woman with a baby in her arms and four shirted little pickneys playing good-temperedly round about her. The hatches and the decks were littered with chairs and cushions and bottles and food. Down in the scuppers the sailors were standing tap, tap, tapping at the iron to get the old paint off before the new should go on again.

The purser came up and stood beside me. He was a nice big creature, a German, of about forty-five, with a healthy apple-red face, sharp, twinkling blue eyes, and a turn-up nose. He wore a little tow-coloured Emperor William moustache, and his head was the shape of a bullet. He was very alert, very reflective, and he spoke an English which was adorable. The words came tumbling out breathlessly, and as he talked he watched your face to see if he was right. Sometimes he finished his sentences with "Yes-no?" Sometimes with "Thank-you please." He never said anything but what was nice and honest and sincere, and only once was he very sentimental. There was a lot of time to put in, and we had much talk in a scrappy sort of way.

THE MULBERRY TREE

A great-uncle of mine was once a merchant in Hamburg; the purser came from Hamburg. His name was So-and-so: my great-uncle's name was So-and-so. Such ties as those discovered in such a latitude made acquaintanceship easy. Also he had earned my gratitude by doing many kindnesses for me. Cruising in those waters I would have come off rather badly without some one to smooth the way.

"She vass more cool at de oder end of de deck. Perhaps you would like to come; yes-no?" He looked at me inquiringly.

"Yes, it would be nicer." We walked slowly up the deck to where "she vass more cool," and stood looking out across the bay and over the green plain that girdles the shore to the distant mountains where the Black Napoleon built his famous citadel. Up there upon that peak which rises superbly above all the others one could just see dimly the outlines of the citadel. Unless one knew it was there, one would take it to be no more than the cap of the mountain. Like a crown upon the veiled head of a woman it stands silhouetted against the clouds, a stupendous monument of a stupendous ego. A hundred years ago Christophe, self-styled Emperor of Northern Haiti, pure African negro and born slave, built this stronghold in the heavens, at the cost, it is said, of thirty thousand lives. Half-way down the mountain is his palace, the Palace of Sans Souci, which name is a rather cruel jeer at the poor wretches who built it. For fourteen years he enjoyed the power of a Czar. The tales of his despotism and inhumanity are appalling. That his end came with defeat one is glad to know, yet by his death he compelled a certain respect. He bore the Great Napoleon a grudge for allowing himself to be taken. When his own turn came and he saw himself

deserted, he retired into a room above and blew his brains out. Lying within the fortress there is said to be fifteen millions worth of treasure, a nice little nest-egg for the country that steps in finally to awaken the sleeping princess.

The purser gave me my ticket, which he had asked for earlier in the day. I took it and looked idly down the printed rules on the back of it. There was a magnificent device at the top, all over eagles. It reminded me of the garden at the back of Myrtle Bank Hotel. When first I arrived in Kingston I took all the John Crows for eagles. Having got used to them as crows, all eagles now looked like them.

I pointed out the device to the purser.

"Why do you have crows on your arms in Germany?" I asked.

The purser looked at me, than at the device, then at me again. "Grows? Grows?" he repeated thoughtfully; then a light broke over him and he jumped many feet in the air.

"*Grows!*" he shouted. "Mein Gott, grows! They vos not grows, they vos EACLES!"

I apologized, but it was some time before he was calm again; and every now and then he would look at me and mutter, "Grows, mein Gott!" under his breath, wiping his forehead with his handkerchief a little shakily.

I studied the rules on the back of the ticket to give him time to recover.

"It's a funny language yours, isn't it?" I said at last.

"Vunny?" he asked, with his brows knitted and his fascinating expression of wanting to learn coming over his nice good-natured face. "Vunny! please I don't know?"

"Odd, strange." I waved my hands for some more words. "Unusual."

"How is it vunny; you tell me, thank-you please?" He leaned forward eagerly and looked at the paper.

"Well, here is a word." I spelt it slowly, "S-c-h-a-d-e-n-z-e-r-s-a-t-z-a-n-s-p-r-ü-c-h-e; what would that mean?"

"Schadenzersatzansprüche," he said it with no more difficulty than I would say "nose" or "hat." "Schadenzersatzansprüche, it is vot you zay 'glaimz.'"

I took my pocket-book out of my bag and opened it at a blank page.

"Would you mind writing that down for me in case I lose my ticket?" I asked.

He wrote it carefully. Underneath I wrote in very small letters the English for it, "claims." It looked very forlorn.

"There's no doubt about it," I said, studying the paper very carefully. "And I don't know how you, who are such a busy nation, find time for it."

"Please?" he looked at me patiently.

"If we," I went on, "had to say "schadenzersatzansprüche' every time we made one, we never would make one. Perhaps that is the idea, to frighten you off?"

He looked mystified. "It does mean *all* glaimz," he said defensively.

"Why not say that and have done with it as we do?" I replied. "Here's another: g-e-p-ä-c-k-s-c-h-e-i-n-b-e-d-i-n-g-u-n-g-e-n. What does that spell?"

"Gepäckscheinbedingungen; it is der rules vot is on der baggage labels."

I folded up the ticket and put it in my bag, shutting the snap decisively.

"I can't do it," I said.

He watched my face. "Vot is it, please, vot you can't do?" Then suddenly he smiled.

"I cannot learn to speak your language. I'm afraid of it. Why are you smiling?"

He gazed out across the water, to where the cables stretched taut across from our vessel to the bows of the *Cecilie*, without speaking for a moment. When he spoke the smile was in his voice.

"Vunce in my life dose vurds vot you zay make me avraid very much." He settled his elbows on the rail and stuck his chin into the palms of his hands. "It vos ven I go mit mein wife to make vot you zay der—deglaration—yes, please? before der nodary. He vos a man in my town dat I know from ven I vos young man. All der times ven I vos talking he vos geeping himself qvite qviet and he say nodings. Ven I shtop a minute he look out before himself. Den he zay zoftly mit his head shaking, 'I can't do it, I can't do it.' I look at mein vife and I tink to mein zelf, 'Mein Gott! vy can't he do it?' Den he zay again to himzelf zoftly, 'It vos no goot,' and I begin to vonder if he haf vound out der tings of before I vos in love mit my vife, und I am avraid. Den he look a long time into der gorner of der room and say again, 'It is no goot. I must haf a fire in dis room: it iss too cold mitout von.' And I pull myzelf up straight and take a long breat, and I say, 'Chesus!'" He fell into a trance of memory.

Later that evening we stood looking over the side of the ship across the moonlit water to the lamps that studded the dark shore with jewels. The stranded steamer was ablaze with lights, and little row-boats kept running backwards and forwards like page-boys between the two vessels. Our captain was away

conferring with the captain of the *Cecilie*, the doctor and the second officer were having their hair cut by the barber of the *Cecilie*, and the chief was busy amidships trying to get rid of a drunken bunch of the *Cecilie's* sailors who were brawling in a boat at the foot of the companion ladder and half killing a Haitian boatman.

The night was hot. I leaned my arms across the rails; the moonlight streamed down whitely. I felt a gentle touch upon my bare arm : it was the purser.

" Dey are zo zoft," he said, with a gentle reverence in his voice. I looked down at them. They really looked very nice in the moonlight. I did not take them away; it would have been rather young-maidish, and he was being quite respectful.

" Dey are zo zoft," he repeated, " dey are too zoft "—he always said " too " for " very." Then a sudden gust of passion for the beauty of them swept him off his feet. " Dey are—dey are like *Cervelat-wurst !* " he said breathlessly.

I looked at them again.

" Is that the sausage you like best of all ? " I asked gently, not wishing to break in too roughly upon his ecstasy.

He nodded dreamily.

" *I* always like *Leberwurst,*" I said.

He nodded again, still in the haze of his dream. " I too meinzelf, I like *Leberwurst,*" he said pensively, " but she must be vresh."

The moonlight streamed down and mingled with the silence. Thank God for poetry.

ON THE WAY TO SAN JOSÉ

XXIII

ON THE WAY TO SAN JOSÉ

By an odd chance the only other occupant of the observation platform, when I got on the train at Limon for San José was the unpleasant Englishman who travelled out with me from England to Jamaica. We greeted each other coldly. He entrenched himself in one corner behind a huge bag of oranges and a paper. He did not give me any oranges, which made me know at once what a horrid little beast he must have been in the nursery. Neither did he offer to buy me any. I think it must be that in the village from which he came an offer of an orange was considered as binding as an offer of marriage. Anyhow the Englishman was not taking any risks. I took the other chair in the opposite corner and tried not to feel any more like the Scarlet Woman than I could help.

We were the first to get on the train, which stood in the middle of the street. Presently along one of the piers came an unending stream of people pouring out of the side of the great steamer that lay alongside. Naturally they were Americans, every one. Young men and maidens mostly, high-spirited, high-voiced, with the usually happy absorption of unfettered youth taking possession of the universe with a tourist's ticket. They swarmed the train, chattering and laughing and calling to one another as if no one existed but themselves, and they had brought the train with them. One does that

at eighteen, when one goes about in companies of hundreds. They took possession of the platform on which I and the Englishman were sitting like two stone lions of a museum stairway. They crammed chairs *beside* one and in *front* of one, and almost *on* one. They yelled to their friends inside the car to come out when already the platform was packed to bursting and young men were perched perilously in dozens upon the railings. The train started and they began to sing. During the six hours' journey from Limon to San José we had every rag-time and every popular air that had been entrancing musical comedy patrons for the past three seasons. And also all the jokes manufactured on the spot by a joyous crowd who were seeing life for the first time, and liked it. The still silent hills echoed with the strains of "Oh, You Great Big Beautiful Doll," and the cackles of applause that followed. Alexander's Rag-time Band went rattling down the precipices to the valleys below, and the shrill clatter of feminine voices followed like the hail of pebbles that scatter along behind the rolling stone. At Turrialba they bought the famous pineapples, and I had cause to be thankful that they were good shots, as pieces of skin went whizzing past my nose through the open window beside me. Hour upon hour of their incessant din made me wish every time we crossed a gorge that I could have swept the whole chattering crowd of them off into the abyss below. There were times when it became so awful that I wanted not to get rid of them in a heap, but to take each by his individual neck, twist it, and watch him roll to the bottom. But alongside of this ran a strict feeling of justice. I was an alien; this was their country. They were twenty, and they took their exercise so. And fifty of them were agreed as one man that the proper way to enjoy yourself

travelling was to make as much row as you could. In fifty ayes to one no, the ayes generally have it.

But I got a little solace through watching the Englishman. As they crowded on, blissfully unconscious of any but themselves, yet good-natured as could be, the Englishman with a dreadful look of disgust retired more and more within his corner, till he and his paper and his oranges looked more like a picture on the wall than anything else. For a good while nobody noticed either of us. Then suddenly a nice, quiet, middle-aged man, who had been sitting with his wife serene and undisturbed in the midst of all the chaos, turned round and addressed himself to the Englishman. He had, while the young ones were yelling, been " taking notice."

" Sir," he began courteously, " are you familiar with the bread-fruit ? "

I looked at the American with his face so full of an earnest desire to learn, and then at the Englishman, who was too stunned at being addressed to be able to gather his wits together for a reply, and I nearly laughed. It was adorable of the American to think that the Englishman could ever be familiar with anything.

The American repeated his question, and as I watched, it was borne in upon me that whatever the Englishman might be familiar with, it certainly was not the bread-fruit. Now I don't want to boast in any way, but there were two things that had printed themselves indelibly on my mind. One was the bread-fruit and the other the hibiscus. The way they managed to impress themselves upon my understanding was very simple. The bread-fruit has such a beautiful and unusual foliage that immediately you see it you are moved to ask its name. And the hibiscus—I once heard this painted sentence, and I never could forget it : " They set their boundaries with hibiscus here."

Therefore when I saw my countryman not very well on account of being asked a question he could not answer by a bounder he did not know, I intelligently but very modestly took the matter in hand. "That," I said, pointing with my finger to the tree that had been holding up the American, "is the bread-fruit." Then like Cincinnatus (was it ?) I went back to my plough.

There was an interval. After a good long time the American appealed again to the Englishman, which was rather ungrateful of him, I thought, considering it was I who had helped him out before; but no matter. Could I believe my senses ?—it was hibiscus he was asking for this time, only he did not know the name of it !

"That, sir," he said, pointing his finger at the lovely flame-coloured blossom. "That is the—er—er——? "

"Er—er——" repeated the Englishman gropingly.

"Poin—poin—? " continued the American bravely.

"Poinsettia, yes ! " gasped the Englishman, for all the world like a dog scrambling up a bank from the pond into which he has been unexpectedly flung.

I sat back. The American didn't deserve to know it as anything but a poinsettia because of the way he had ignored me; the Englishman was being quite severely enough punished as it was. And above all I loved my country, and would not show up its weak points in a foreign land. In such manner does information spread.

The journey through the mountains is magnificent. For some time after the train leaves Limon it runs through level country. All along the line on either side are the negro shacks belonging to the men who are employed on the banana farms. Every station is a township, and the Chinese seem to be the chief store-keepers, although in every district the Fruit Company has its commissaries at certain stations which are

supplied from the main commissary: at Limon for Costa Rica; at Santa Marta for Colombia; at Almirante for Panama, and so on. As the train comes into the stations every one is either there to meet it or else watching it from their verandahs. Tailoring seems to be a busy trade, and photography is also in demand. Outside one of the doors I saw pinned up the notice—

PHOTO TAKEN FROM TOP TO TOE 6 CENTS.

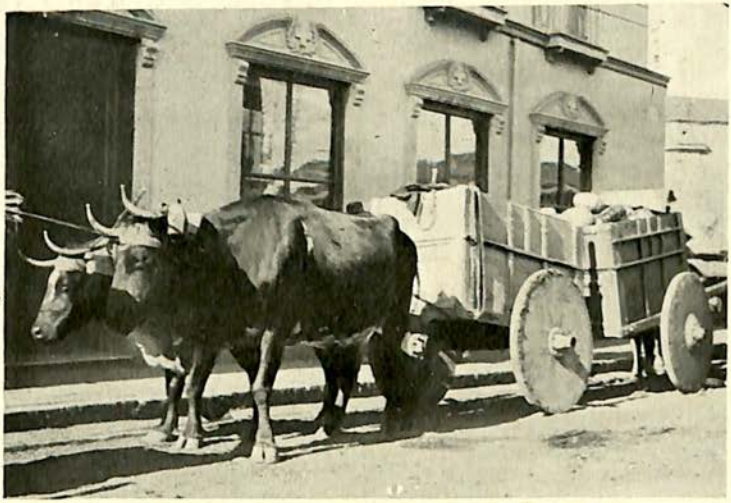
And the barber, if he wishes to be popular, must have other qualifications than we on our side of the world demand. Over his door more often than not hangs the cryptic sign, "Straightener." Instead of advertising "somebody's permanent wave," he urges upon you somebody else's curl extinguisher; "guaranteed after two or three applications to render the crinkliest hair straight and pleasing." Heigho! One half of the world is trying all it knows to get rid of what the other half wants. To my sorrow I have never found anything yet that would induce my hair to curl when it wasn't feeling like it.

It is said that the negro is allowed to go as far as Turrialba and no farther. The Costa Rican prides himself upon the purity of his blood. Certainly as we pass Turrialba the negro disappears. The train goes on slowly, mounting all the way. Little frail-looking bridges carry us across great deep canyons and by the side of rocky torrential river-beds. Constant and vigilant care has to be given to this railway, with which the elements seem to be everlastingly at war. As we thread our way through the great chain of mountains the air gets colder. You have started at sea level and risen to a height of between four and five thousand feet. Then, suddenly, the train goes down, down, down, and your ears begin to hurt. I was deaf when we reached Cartago.

As we went by I remembered dimly having read of an earthquake which had devastated a town in Central America two years before. The town was Cartago, and of it nothing remained after the earthquake. Yet two years after a new town was springing up as gaily as if no more than a high wind had blown down a stack of cards.

For thirteen or fourteen miles more we run along between pleasant fields and luxuriant gardens; then the houses become more numerous, and at last we run out of the sunshine into the big covered station and we are at San José, a hundred miles across the Cordilleras from the Atlantic side, and seventy-six from Puntarenas on the Pacific.

SAN JOSÉ

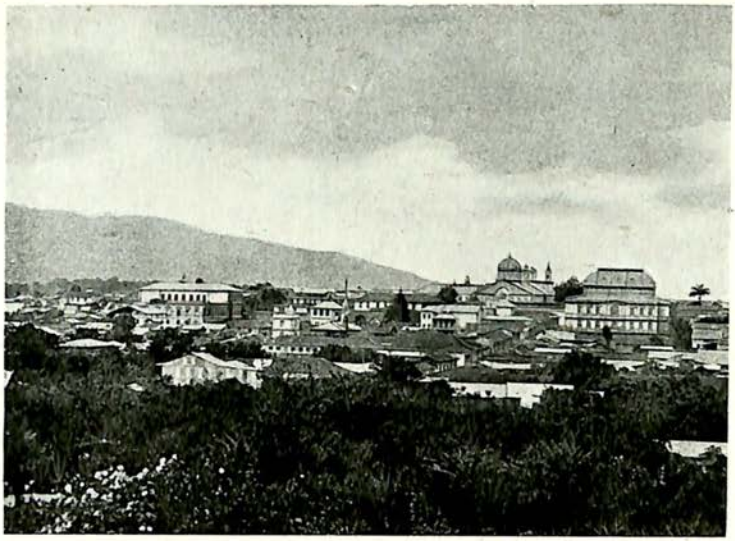


OX CARTS, SAN JOSÉ, COSTA RICA

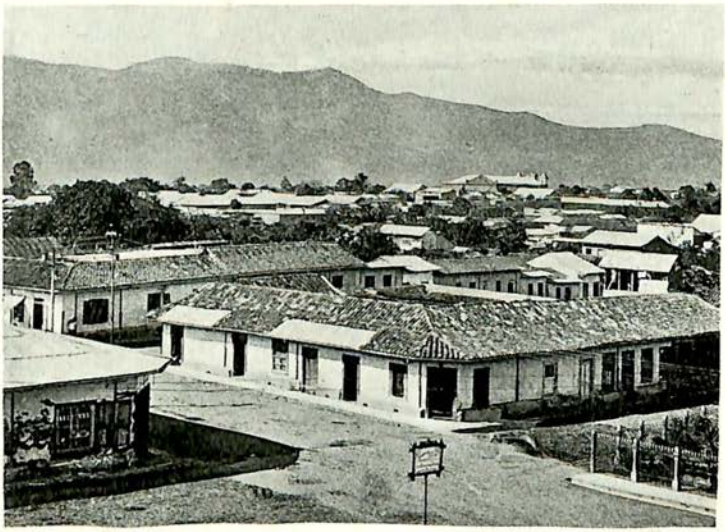


OUTSIDE THE MARKET, COSTA RICA

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SAN JOSÉ, CAPITAL OF COSTA RICA



TYPICAL HOUSES OF AN EARTHQUAKE TOWN

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XXIV

SAN JOSÉ

SAN JOSÉ is memorable to me chiefly as a place in which I was dreadfully afraid. It has other qualifications to recommend it, I know, but the fear I suffered was of so disintegrating a nature that I had very little vitality left with which to gather pleasing and instructive facts. It has a theatre modelled on the Paris Opera House, a population of close on 400,000, and a lunatic asylum that is only a little less magnificent than an old French palace; but all those wonders sink into insignificance before the one overwhelming sensation which possessed me while I was there.

I went twice, the second time because I thought I had been an idiot for running away so quickly from it. When I arrived the first time I found that the town had been visited by a shock of earthquake a little while before, and that another was expected between the dates of the fourth and the seventh. I got there on the fifth, was shown the cracks in the different buildings by the coachman who drove me for an hour before dinner, and went to bed waiting for the morning. When it came I was about the first on the train that took the tourists back to Limon. On the return from Panama I thought I would try again, and *did ;* thereby adding five more nights of anguish to the one that had been too much in the first place.

During the day one's fears retired into the background, and I went about fairly happily. There are not many things to see in San José. It is a clean, tidy little place of the insignificant architecture of an earthquake town. The low one-storeyed dwellings are outwardly very poor-looking, but inside are redeemed by the *patio*, the feature of nearly all the Spanish American houses. There is something very restful and soothing in the quiet court planted with trees and ferns, with its wide-flagged verandah running round three and sometimes four sides. All the rooms open on to this verandah, which is furnished with easy-chairs and little tables, and is the most used part of the house. It is very pleasant to sit in the shade and yet see the sunlight filtering in through cool green plants and ferns.

If I were bad I would like to be bad in Panama and serve my time in the Chiriqui Prison. If I were mad I would choose to be mad in San José, for I've never seen or heard or even dreamt of anything like the lunatic asylum there.

I was taken over it by one of the Governors. We went first into a large reception-room to await the doctor who was to be our guide. The hangings and furnishings of the room were very rich and magnificent, but the floor was the pride of it. In both that reception-room and another like it the floors were of very wonderful marquetry done in all the native woods, and done entirely by the inmates of the asylum! The doctor led us down a spotlessly kept corridor with sleeping-rooms on one side and bathrooms on the other. The rooms were in no way like cells, nor even were they as poorly furnished as the rooms of some nursing-homes that I have seen where the fees begin at a guinea a day. Each room contained two beds, and was exquisite in the daintiness of its appointments. A narrow white enamel bed



LUNATIC ASYLUM, SAN JOSÉ

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IN THE GARDENS, LUNATIC ASYLUM, SAN JOSÉ

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dressed with snowy linen was placed parallel with each opposite wall, a chair by the head of each bed, and a little dressing-table in between. I think I remember a small bedside table as well, but I am not sure. Everything seemed to have been chosen with the idea of making it *look* right as well as *be* right. And the polished floors might have been the envy of many a great lady in her own great house.

On the other side of the corridor I was shown the baths. At this asylum their chief method of treatment is by baths: but there are baths and baths, and the bathrooms I saw there filled me with a sudden pang of desire. Blue and white tiles under your feet and white tiles to the ceilings; a Roman-looking pool sunk in the floor, and taps and showers to your heart's content. I would love to go back now and turn them all on.

We went out into the kitchens and sculleries, great airy halls with tiled floors and everything that could make for convenience, but nothing that would "clutter." The work is all done by the inmates, under supervision. The women wash and cook and sew, and the men garden and, I suppose, polish the floors and clean, but I did not ask that. A little Jamaican girl sat at a machine, silent, melancholy and aloof, as if she took no interest in anything that was going on about her. They tell me that madness with the Jamaican is nearly always the result of religion. That is easy enough to believe after one has seen the zealous Jamaican busy at his prayers.

We went out through the garden, by the pool with its stepping-stones and its water-lilies, past the marble basin with its shrinking Venus who holds eternally the slipping cloak that never falls; and on towards the hospital. All hospitals seem more or less very much alike. As we walked along a balcony we stopped and

watched a benchful of babies waiting crossly for their evening meal. There was nothing the matter with them. They were as hefty a little lot of grumpies as ever you could want to see. But those women who needed treatment and who had no one to take care of their children for them were allowed to bring them into the hospital. These, if you please, were busy behaving like a lot of testy old clubmen because their dinner was quite five and a half seconds late in the serving. I couldn't hear what they said, but I knew exactly. They'd have sacked that nurse there and then if they hadn't been bound down by a lot of beastly red tape. The light was going, but I managed to get a very dark picture of them when their bowls arrived. The fourth, eighth and tenth, as you will see if you look closely, showed a faint interest in us, but the rest—for them the whole of life lay in the basins.

I was taken also to the national school by the Englishwoman who went out to San José over a quarter of a century ago to start it, and who only severed her connection with it a few months before I met her. One felt in going round with her that although she had given up the reins, yet the institution was still as much her baby as the bride is to the nurse who brought her up from the first cry. We went into the room where the girls' singing class was being held. The lesson was stopped, and the children sang for us the Costa Rican National Anthem. As they sang I watched them. There were rows and rows of them. Shy ones, impish ones, solemn ones, roystering ones; curly mops, basin crops, shock heads and pigtails. They sang with that fine gusto and that piercing metallic strength that belongs to children, and as they squinted at us out of the tails of their eyes a feeling of wonderment came over me. It seemed no more than yesterday that I was one of

the monkeys there. I saw the school-room door open and the head mistress appear, a tall, straight, terrifying person with a cold eye, in whose black books I eternally lived. Two strangers followed her, grown-ups, who could wear what they liked, pay visits whenever they liked, and were treated with courtesy and deference on every occasion. The singing stopped itself, and there were bowings and scrapings between the singing-master and the visitors. I shall never forget the thrills those interruptions gave me. There was for the moment a complete truce to hostilities. A cold beam took the place of displeasure in the eye of the mistress, in which beam, I the outcast, might bask during that instant in which it lighted upon the just and the unjust alike. Every visitor, plain or beautiful, brought me a sensation. Then the master—poor dear, I see him now! A weary life, for a big heavy man with a thick black beard, to hit a blackboard every day with a tuning-fork and sing over and over again—

"All among the barley, who would not be blithe,"

with a lot of careless brats who squeaked along with him like so many puppies trying to bark.

The thing that struck me suddenly and made me almost gasp was this; I was not one of the brats, I was a Visitor! One of the grand, dignified, mysterious beings who had thrilled me so often in my early days. Did I make these little beggars feel like that? Oh, I hoped I did, but I'm afraid not! I listened in a queenly, gracious way, smiling the same benign thanks that the Visitors of my time bent on us, yet I hardly dared to hope mine looked the same. And one can scarcely ask. I went away from there feeling half a Visitor and half a brat, a desperately unsatisfactory cross.

Each night when I went to bed my earthquake fears

came crowding back upon me: Cartago, the scene of that dreadful catastrophe, no more than thirteen miles away. From the time of its destruction two years ago the British Consul's wife at San José had kept a tent erected in the garden, and the two children slept in it every night. There seems to be this result in an earthquake town; people do not by habit get used to the shocks. Each one seems to take a little more of their nerve from them. A man who had lived in San José for some time said to me one day, "Believe me, there is no courage to spare when the shocks come: it is out of your bed into the street without a thought of what you've got on."

The house in which I was staying was a queer, rambling place with a hundred doors and no exits. If you did not know the plan of it—and four days' diligent study seemed only to teach me a few more doors—you would have time to be buried half-a-dozen times in the ruins. I used to lie and shiver in bed with the French windows open on to the street, and wonder if I would break my neck if I dropped over the little iron balcony that screened them.

The Sunday before I left was Passion Sunday. On that day there is nearly always a procession in one or two of the outlying villages, depicting Christ riding into Jerusalem on the ass. I was very anxious to see this, and hearing that the procession at Alajuela, thirteen miles away, was not to begin till eleven, a search was made to find a companion for me, and a very kind American allowed himself to be dragged out of his Sunday morning's rest and made into a guide for my benefit.

That, apart from the good companionship I had, was one of the most dreadful Sundays I've ever experienced; which, looking back upon my life, is rather a big thing

to say. It would not have been quite so bad if we had not had half-an-hour to spare before the train went. Having that, we went in to spend it with the Consul's wife and Emmy Lou and John. That may seem like a reflection upon one who was very good to me, but she will understand well enough that there's no discourtesy in it, for she knows the facts.

Hearing that we were going to Alajuela, she said we must go and have tea at Il Brazil, the farm where her husband had gone for the week-end, which was no more than a mile and a quarter out of the town. She would telephone to them to send the horses.

That all sounded very nice. Just before we started she said, "Of course you ride?"

Now I do not ride. What is more, I have an utterly unexplainable but overwhelming and unconquerable fear of horses. The only reason I can advance for it is that I was either eaten slowly or else trampled to death by horses in a previous existence. As a child we used to be taken out for pleasure drives when we went to stay at the seaside. I always went, but the moment I put my foot on the step of the wagonette I started to say my prayers and hold on to the buttons of my coat. Every time the horses put their ears back I half twisted the buttons off. It was bad for my coat, but it kept me from screaming out. It sounds quite ridiculous, but it is quite true.

I said, "No, I don't ride. Why?"

She looked disturbed. "The horses——" she said.

Then I knew that they would not be in a carriage, but with saddles on their backs. I remembered one day in the yard when I was no more than eight. There was an old grey mare. I was set on its back, and three people, one in front and one on either side, led me

round the yard. The result of that ride was that I nearly died of heart failure.

I must have looked very sick, for she hurried up to comfort me.

"It's quite safe," she said kindly; "nothing can happen. They'll walk all the way, and the grey pony is as sure-footed as a cat."

I didn't listen. I just kept saying over and over again to myself, "This is your chance. Now you can prove to yourself that it is nothing but fear that keeps you from doing things you want to do. And senseless, stupid fear. You can do anything in this world that you want to do; d'you hear? anything that you want to do."

"It's all right," I said; "I will go."

We got to Alajuela. Service was just over, and the people came pouring out of the doors and down the wide steps of the cathedral. Never have I seen more lovely shawls that I saw that Sunday morning on the shoulders of the villagers. And the colours against the white steps and the blue, blue sky! Pink, blue, rose, scarlet, just like a garden of poppies. The Spanish shawl is Chinese, and many of them are handed down from generation to generation. One, of a gorgeous dull old gold, had a thick border of flowers all round it, above the deep knotted silk fringe, with such colours in the embroidery as the Chinese so unerringly know how to mass together; the colours of real flowers as they grow crowded in a garden. Another of black was patterned all over in a scroll-work of white in that fine rich work that is as beautiful one side as the other.

We waited and waited, but there was no procession. At last we inquired. The procession had been and gone. It began at nine and ended at ten thirty. We had arrived at ten forty-five.



PASSION SUNDAY AT ALAGUELA



A SUPREME MOMENT

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Very blankly and dejectedly we looked at each other, then, there being nothing else to do, we went over to the primitive little eating-house and ordered breakfast. "The Horses"—oh, dreadful sound—were to be at the stables at one o'clock.

One is always a little better *after* breakfast if one was hungry before it. I had been very hungry before, and very disappointed at not seeing the procession, and on the way to breakfast "The Horses at the stables" seemed about as cheerful as the "lions at the arena." But food at some times in one's life is more than prayer. I did not walk gaily to the stables, but still I was *able* to walk, which was fairly courageous considering I had no doubt but that I was walking to my death. I know that people ordinarily do not die of horses, but they do sometimes die of the thing they are most afraid of, and I am more afraid of horses than of anything—unless it is tarantulas.

We went into the stable-yard, which was all covered in, with posts dotted about it at intervals. There was a grey pony and a mule; the grey pony had the side-saddle. A chair was brought and put beside it. Would I get up on the chair? The man who had brought me and the boy who had brought the Horses would help me to get up on the Horse.

To those who learnt to mount when they numbered half-a-dozen years and half as many stone, this will mean nothing; but of the others I ask it—Have you ever, at that particular milestone of maturity when you are afraid of nothing that you *have* done and of everything that you haven't, tried to fling yourself from a rickety kitchen chair on to the mid-air back of the dragon of your childhood, in a skirt not quite two yards in circumference? That is my first experience of mounting a horse. Somehow or other I got there, and

with the sound of rushing water in my ears that comes just before a faint, I was conscious of them sorting my feet and arranging them in a manner to please their technical fancies. I felt, vaguely, as I used to feel in babyhood when my fingers were being found inside my woollen gloves, and poked into their right apartments. Then into my swoon broke these words—

"You're not quite right, you'll have to come off again."

I went through it all over again, and the change, I suppose, brought me back to consciousness, for by the time the American was fixing himself up on his mule I was sitting up quite nicely and beginning to use my intelligence. The Horse stood motionless, it wasn't so bad after all. And the boy was to lead it all the way.

My companion gave himself a little hitch in the saddle.

"Are you ready?" he asked cheerfully.

"Yes," I answered.

"All right; come on."

Then something happened. The earth broke away from under me, the world gave way beneath my feet. The Horse had moved.

I felt my heart slipping down, down through my body! down through the pit, away into eternal space. I cried out, but my voice wouldn't make any sound. A post slipped by me. I flung out my arms to clasp it. Some merciful Providence made me miss it, or else the Horse would have walked away from under me and left me clinging to the rafters. Out we passed from the comparative safety of the stable to the dreadful street and the blazing sun. Before us the road stretched out unendingly, dusty and sun-stricken. As we got away from the paved street the road became rougher. There was one nice flat piece in the middle at which I looked

longingly, but the mule had taken that and was sticking to it. The Horse instead picked out two ledges by the left ditch, and setting the right pair of feet in the high one and the left pair in the low one, refused to travel any other way. Every now and then the stable-boy who was leading it would give it a push on to the level, which made it promptly react towards the ditch. And there were hills. The going-up part was the only peace I had all the way. On the going-down I seemed to be sitting on the Horse's ears. Only a supernatural power seemed to keep me in the saddle at all.

The American talked to me, and I made answers that I hoped fitted his kindly chat, but my heart said, "Fiend, why will you torment me? Can't you see my misery? Don't you feel my heart bleaching with the horror that fills me? Mocker, torturer——"

"There's the gate," he said. "How d'you feel now? not so bad, was it?"

We went in through the gate, and a tall man came out to meet us. I dropped the reins and flung up my arms.

"Take me, oh, take me!" I cried in an anguish.

To this day I cannot make out whether he thought my advances excessive and my joy a thing that would have been better veiled; but he did not take me. The Horse was led to a place that seemed like the platforms they have at the Zoo for getting on to elephants, and I dismounted with ease and came down on to my own beloved feet to walk the earth again, a sane and happy being. There were no beasts to take us back. We walked every blissful step of the way. The feet of him that brought good tidings and that published peace were no more beautiful upon the mountains than were mine that took me along the dusty, bumpy road to the station. It was one mile and a quarter of pure ecstasy.

We got back to San José in the cool of the afternoon. Pretty young Costa Ricans were entertaining their beaux in the customary manner. There are no grilles before the windows there. When I asked why not—for the Costa Ricans pride themselves on the purity of their Spanish descent, and one would imagine that Spanish customs would continue to flourish in that pride—I was told that a President, seeing himself home late one dark night, fell against a grille and hurt himself. This made him so angry that he had them all taken away. Be that as it may there are no iron bars between the lovers. The girls sit at the open windows leaning their elbows upon cushions that are made to match their frocks, and the young men stand on the pavement outside and look unutterable things up at the faces that are languishing over the cushions. We passed window after window so engaged. I could not help thinking of the heartburnings and the bitternesses that such public love-making would cause. My young gallant stands no more at the window of Anita, but suns himself in the light of another pair of eyes. And Sancha the shameless one has another scalp at her trim little waist-belt.

When one sees how short a time the little waist remains a trim one, there is small reason for surprise that the competition is keen while it lasts. In such countries the opulent beauties become unwieldy and the *petite* ones withered. Quite young children powder, and colour their lips; and the girl of fourteen or fifteen nearly always has a thick coat of whitewash over her olive skin, no matter how soft and pretty it may be. The unpainted and undecorated Costa Rican girl—I remember one—when she is pretty, is as pretty a thing as you could want to see. Slender, willowy, with clear pale olive skin, dark rippling hair and lovely soft brown eyes. But the women of the Spanish American countries

are not content to let well alone. If they would take advantage of their natural beauties while they lasted, and make up when nature began to fall short, there would be wisdom in their art; as it is they spoil their freshness and hasten on the decay of their charm. Powder is the very best friend a woman has, and the woman who deliberately forgets to say an occasional prayer for the inventor of it is an ingrate who is not worth discussing; but the wise woman uses it as a means to blot out her infirmities, not as a mask to hide her beauty. It makes one indignant with the mothers of these children, whose young skins are gifts straight from the workshops of the gods, that they should allow them to bedaub themselves as they do.

That Sunday night was my last night in San José. I was to go by the morning train to Limon to catch my boat for Jamaica. As I was undressing for bed the girl in whose house I was staying came into my room. She seemed uneasy and restless, and I asked her what was the matter.

"I don't know," she said uncertainly, "but I feel as if something were going to happen."

"What sort of thing?" I asked quickly, all my terrors crowding back again. "An earthquake?"

She nodded. "I've been on edge all day," she said.

We talked for a while about it, with the result that she came to sleep in the empty room beside mine. We were the only two in the house that night; every one else was away for the week-end. The communicating door between the two rooms was left open, and I kept the light burning in my room. Before I got into bed I put my kimono over the bed just within reach of my hand, so that I could grasp it if I got up quickly. Then I shut my eyes and tried to go to sleep.

It wasn't very much use. Once I was nearly off, and

THE MULBERRY TREE

I woke suddenly with a start. I sat up, my heart making that sickening flutter that is like birds' wings inside one, and listened. There was nothing, but the night was so still that one seemed to hear everything. Then I lay back on the pillows and tried again to sleep. Twice I got up and went to the window. I looked out over the low housetops to the ring of hills that shut in the little sleeping town. Out that way lay Cartago. I strained my ears to listen for the sounds that filled the silence. Far away a cock crowed, and a dog kept on barking restlessly. It seemed as if the air was charged with a dim murmur of protest. The bright moonlight that flooded the sky and whitened the houses would be enough reason for the noise in another part of the earth, but here one remembered the disquietude of animals before a catastrophe, and it sounded like a portent.

Down in the deserted street all the houses were dark and silent. At the corner a lamp threw a flickering light on to the pavement; there was no sound but the footfall of the watchman walking slowly up and down in the moonlight. A distant clock struck twelve. I stood watching till the cold drove me in, then I went back to bed and lay down again.

I must have slept about an hour and a half. Suddenly a violent shaking woke me, and I found myself standing beside the bed. The light was burning and my watch pointed to twenty-five minutes past one. I called out. The girl in the next room was through the door in a moment.

"Did you feel that?" she asked quickly.

"Yes; what shall we do? shall we go?"

"Wait," she said; "there's usually another directly after the first."

We waited. I did not know why we should wait if

there were going to be a second, but she seemed to know, so I did as I was told. For what seemed like hours we stood listening; but there was no sound, and no repetition of the shock. We went to the window and looked down. No one had rushed out into the street, and the watchman was still walking up and down: the latter was not a great deal of consolation, because after all there was nothing else for him to do, whatever happened, but it seemed cheering to see him still there. In time, pretty well worn out with the emotions of the day and the night both, I went back to bed and slept till broad daylight.

I am always very much ashamed of my dreadful physical cowardice, but when I get too abased I comfort myself with the well-known story that Lady Beaconsfield used to tell about her husband. "Dizzy," she said, "had plenty of moral courage but no physical courage. I always have to pull the string of his shower-bath."

FROM JAMAICA TO PANAMA

XXV

FROM JAMAICA TO PANAMA

I ARRIVED in Jamaica about the middle of February, to find Kingston crowded out. The West Indian season was in full swing, and the last year of the making of the Panama Canal had begun. Next year, if things went well, the canal would be flooded; this was probably the final chance of seeing it in the making, and all of patriotic America that had the time and the money was tumbling down through New York as fast as it could to look upon the wonders of the nation's handiwork.

On account of this, Jamaica, which stood like a solitary inn upon the road to town, was reaping the benefit. On the way down from New York it was a relief, after five weary days at sea, to be able to get off the ship and stretch yourself for a good long day and night; on the way back there were the five weary days to be contemplated, and an hour or two made a pleasant break. That, on top of the season, made Kingston a dust cloud till May.

Everything was awhirl. The famous Constant Spring Hotel unfortunately was closed, and Myrtle Bank was vainly trying to do a fourfold duty. All the hotels and boarding-houses were filled to overflowing; the streets swarmed with tourists, the wharves could not berth the steamers that came flocking into harbour.

For two weeks I sat in Myrtle Bank Hotel and watched

the coming and going, as fascinated as a youngster at a pantomime. Then, having watched the others doing it for long enough, it occurred to me to do it myself, and I went.

The American "roughs it" superbly. His desert is made to blossom immediately with all the products of the most modern civilization. He goes out to subdue the primæval forest with the equipments of a New York flat. The first things with which he plants his jungle are telephones, ice-boxes, and porcelain baths. Having reduced discomfort to its lowest possible value, he is free to concentrate his energies upon the work that is before him.

This he does with all his might. He is not pampering or cosseting himself by preparing so. The telephone saves time, the bath is a necessity, and the ice-box—well, who ever heard of an American without an ice-box? It is his country's emblem. It asserts his nationality as conclusively as the Stars and Stripes afloat from his roof-tree, besides being much more useful in keeping his butter cool. It is his naturalization papers raised to the highest pinnacle of utilitarianism. Also it is a very good idea. The ordinary tourist has every reason to be very grateful to the American for his large ideas, and his magnificent way of bringing the tropics to heel.

Unless you deliberately choose it, you cannot travel to Panama on the Atlantic side any other way than comfortably. For choice you have the Hamburg-American Line, the Royal Mail, and the United Fruit Company.

Here, again, in the matter of transport, the American has looked after himself. "The great white fleet" of the United Fruit Company, built primarily for the banana trade, and running from New York and New

Orleans to the Atlantic ports of Costa Rica, Panama, and Colombia, have as fine a passenger service as you could ask for anywhere. These ships of 5,000 and 6,000 tons are built exclusively for tropical service, and have all the contrivances necessary to make life bearable in an, at times, not altogether too bearable climate.

The decks are wide and open; the cabins are large, and fitted with electric fans and cold air channels. For those who can afford to travel luxuriously there are cabins with private baths, and also private suites. If one wanted to find fault with anything, one would find it with the food. So many dishes are served that there seems not to be quite enough excellence to go round. I noticed the same at Myrtle Bank, in Jamaica, and at the Tivoli, in Panama. Both these hotels are under American management. There was everything in the name of American dishes that could be crowded in small type on to a capacious menu card. But a little experience taught one to long for what was not.

A severely simple six-course meal to which the cook might give his undivided attention was a consummation to be desired, but never to be realized. As a piece of literature the menu left one dazed; as a meal it left one longing. If there was one dish, there were fifty. But forty-seven of them were not dishes; they were dabs of something. It is true you are not forced to eat them if you don't like them; but such is the power of suggestion that a catalogue of forty-seven dabs will seriously reduce your appetite for the remaining three things that are not dabs; and to have dabs surging round you while you are trying to enjoy the not-dabs finishes you entirely. I do not like dabs.

Colon, which is the Atlantic port of the Isthmus, is forty-eight not too happy hours from Jamaica across the Caribbean Sea. The sea can be as smooth as a mill-

pond, but also it can not. At its worst you have only to imagine forty-eight Channel crossings you would like to forget, and string them together one after the other in order to know what it may cost you to go to Panama from Jamaica. Once I was lucky; twice I was not.

The first sight of Colon is something in the way of a revelation. In the distance one sees a slate-coloured, low-lying mass with ragged edges silhouetted against the sky. As you come nearer, the ragged edges of the silhouette change to coconut palms, and the slate-coloured mass takes definite shape, but such shape as makes you rub your eyes. When you open them again, you are looking upon the famous screened houses that safeguard the white man in Panama, the only form of architecture to be found in the whole of the Canal zone.

My theory about the genesis of the Canal zone house is this, and you can take it for what it is worth, or leave it, as you please: I believe that once upon a time a bungalow of errant fancies fell in love with a meat-safe. The Canal zone house on such a reckoning is obviously the child of the union. I do not think any one has thought of that before, because, if for no other reason than the slightly unusual nature of the circumstances, he would have been likely to record it, and I have not yet seen it recorded. If you do not believe me, go out and look for yourself.

These houses, which have all the attributes of the one parent coupled with the aspect of the other, are built of wood, with corrugated-iron roofs, and they have wide verandahs running round three sides. Sometimes they are of one storey, and sometimes of two, but always they are entirely enclosed with fine copper wire, so fine that when you are on the verandah looking out you forget that there is anything between you and your view. This makes the house mosquito-proof. The

mosquito in Panama meets with very much the same reception as the adventuress in an English seaside town habituated by retired army people. For all the society it is going to get, it might as well be dead. As soon as the authorities can see to it, it is dead.

We arrived in Colon just in time to miss the afternoon train across the Isthmus to Panama City. There was not another train till next morning; the hotels were full, our steamer was going on. I and a pretty American woman, who sat opposite me at table, and who was away for the first time from her husband, were the only two travelling alone. We threw in our lot together, and set out to find a home for the night.

From the pretty American I learnt something. It seems the American looks upon the Englishman very much as the Englishman is reputed to regard the Scotsman. We are supposed by the American to be very slow in the uptake, and I evidently demonstrated the truth of the American's judgment. It was in this way—

At dinner the first night on board, the captain, the pretty American, and I were talking. Apropos of something, I forget what, she turned to the captain and said: "That was when I was singing at the Scala in Milan."

At once I was interested. "Have you sung at the Scala?" I asked quickly.

For answer she looked with a little quiet smile at the captain.

"Oh, these English!" she said with a gentle sort of tolerance, and tapped her forehead significantly.

That meant, as you see, that she had not sung at the Scala, and I was very stupid to think that she had. I felt I had put my country in a false position, and hastened to retrieve it. I apologized, and said that never having seen her before that evening I had no

more right to doubt her having sung at the Scala than she would have to doubt my having written a book if I were to tell her I had. She accepted the justice of the argument, but I know I did not wipe away the stain. For the rest we were most excellent friends for five days, and parted in sorrow when the parting came. But England is in no better position than that in which I inadvertently placed her. I am very sorry, but even now I cannot see that I was altogether to blame.

No other lodging was possible, and there was not a square inch of room for us at either of the two hotels. But our plight turned out to be a lucky one, if what I heard afterwards from the other tourists was true. As it was, the manager of the United Fruit Company took us on board another of the company's steamers in port, installed us in a suite, and gave instructions that we were to be well taken care of till morning, which indeed we were.

After dinner we put scarves round our shoulders and went for a drive round the town. Down there in that part of the world there is no twilight, no lingering day, no slowly-dropping night. It *was* light, and it *is* dark; that is all. When we got into a carriage the glaring electric lamps were blazing in the streets and beating relentlessly upon the faces of the people who were crowding the pavements. Night had come to cover the little ramshackle town, but the little ramshackle town was certainly not ready to go to bed.

Across the road in the little square, planted with palms and crotons, the people were taking the air and listening to the band. Under the verandahs the shops were still open, and the crowds swarmed up and down and in and out. Women stood on the pavement selling lottery tickets, and men gathered together in groups talking over the matters of the day, and sending out a

roving eye for any pretty Miss with a bunch of ribbons and an eye to match their own. The sun had blazed all day over the tin roofs and down upon the stifling houses, and now that night had come everything was thrown open for a breath of air. Through the swinging wickets of the gaily-lighted bars the men passed in and out. Sleep came late to this hot little town when five tourist ships were lying at the wharves.

We drove out of the light and the noise to that quiet, dim corner called Christobal, where the Canal zone officials live in their gigantic meat-safes, or aviaries—one could never say which. Some of the houses were dark, some lighted with a lamp, whose green or red shade glowed softly through the gauze of the screened verandahs. Overhead, with no man-made light to rob them of their lustre, the stars gleamed like points of silver in the velvet darkness, and the sea wind stirred among the whispering palms. There was no other sound but the slow murmuring of the waves as they broke upon the beach. Here at least the night was supreme.

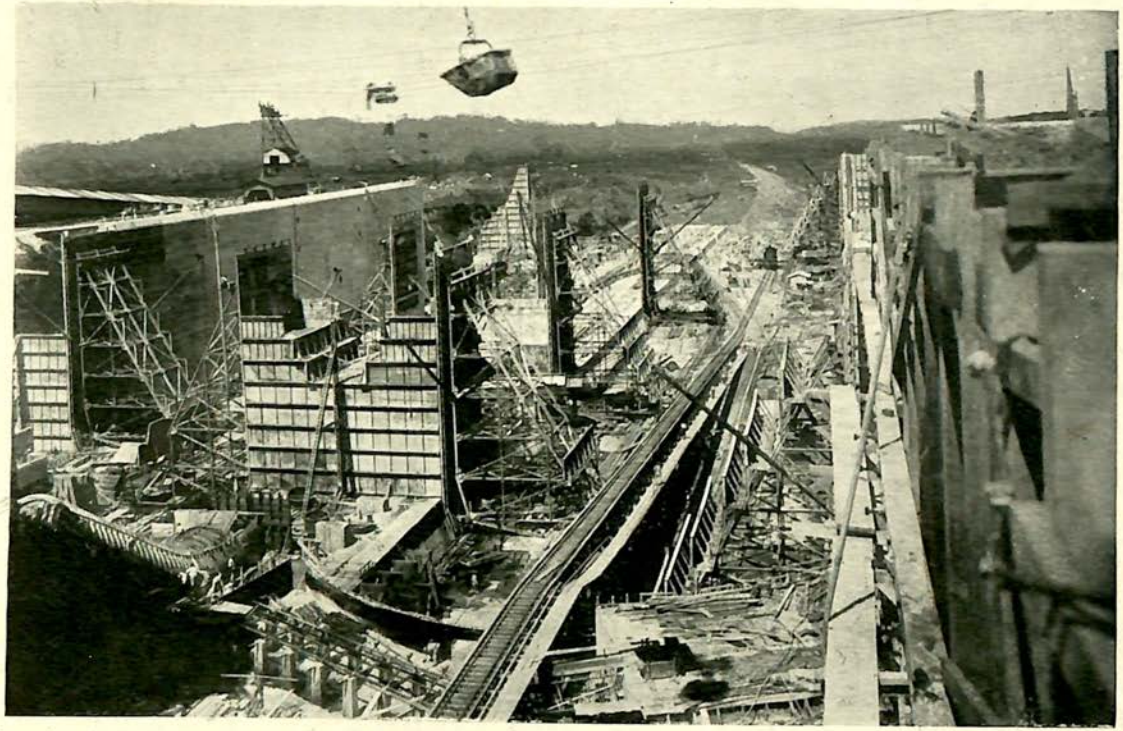
That part of Panama which is called the Canal zone is a strip of land ten miles wide by forty-nine miles long. Through the middle of it, with five miles on either side, runs the Canal itself. The Americans, needing a quarter for themselves at either end, have established Christobal at Colon, on the Atlantic side of the Isthmus, and Ancon at Panama City, on the Pacific side.

These two settlements are as much a part of the towns on which they are quartered as the conservatory is part of the house, but in Christobal and Ancon you are on American territory, while in Colon and Panama City you are under the jurisdiction of Panama. They

are so closely related that there is a clause in the agreement with Panama to the effect that if she is unable to keep order in her own towns, America shall be allowed to step in and mind her business for her. The Americans were very much engaged doing it when I went back to Panama the second time, during the Presidential election. It seems to take many bloody battles to get your ruler to his throne in Panama.

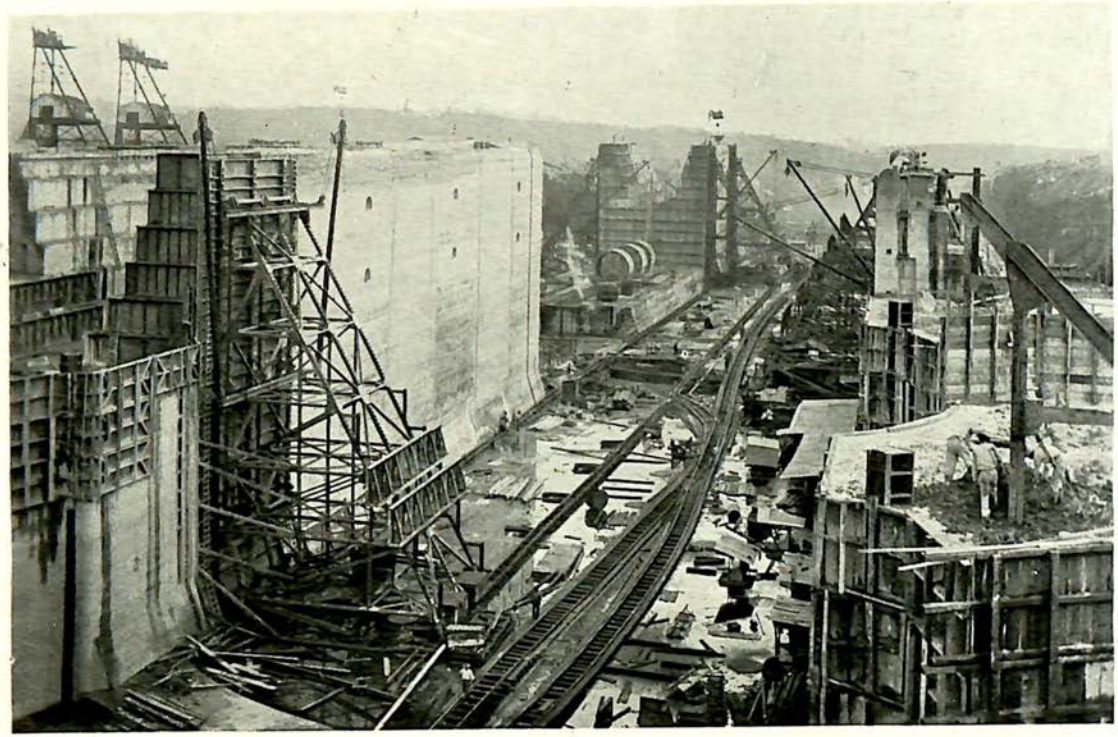
At ten-thirty the morning passenger train leaves Colon for Panama City, and at one o'clock you are in your hotel. Forty-nine miles in two hours and a half is not very rapid travelling, but the train stops everywhere; and at Gorgona, half-way, quite thirty minutes is lost in crossing the Canal. This break, which at first is an interesting one, later on gives you very much the same feelings that possess you on the grand tour from London Bridge to Charing Cross by Cannon Street and Waterloo. Later on still you give up fretting and take it as you learn to take London Bridge to Charing Cross.

After the train leaves Colon it runs through the negro settlement. The houses, large, wooden, two-storey dwellings, with verandahs and balconies and galvanized iron roofs, are ranged up along the left side of the railway line. In these houses scores of families live together, and on the verandahs and balconies everything happens. From the windows of the carriage one sees the life of the encampment going on. In a corner of the verandah a naked little brown thing is splashing delightedly in his bath and evading furiously the mother, who is waiting her chance to take him out. Near by a woman treadles industriously away at her sewing-machine, and a big placid nigger man reads his paper and smokes his pipe, regardless of the dogs and the children and the chickens that are swarming under



GATUN MIDDLE LOCKS

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EAST CHAMBER, UPPER LOCK, GATUN

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his feet and over his head and everywhere round about him.

The train passes and the man looks up for a moment from his paper; perhaps the woman pauses in her sewing—perhaps she doesn't. Some one comes out from a room and stands with folded arms and hunched-up shoulders, looking down upon the children, indifferent and serene. Only the children take notice of the train as it rolls by them. They are stirred by the rush of it into action themselves. The big ones wave their hands and shout; the little ones suddenly jig up and down ecstatically; the baby petrifies into a little bronze god with startled eyes. They did not have these monsters on Olympus.

Gradually the congested houses dwindle. After Gatun, where the great dam is, and seven miles from Limon Bay, the train leaves the Canal. It is a weird journey. One goes through cuttings where the earth is like a red, red wound; over rivers, across swamps and marshes, and through forests so silent and still that one feels nothing can have stirred in them for a thousand years.

Everything is rich and dank and motionless. In one place great gaunt giants, strangled with gorgeous climbing creepers, tower overhead; in another the train runs on a level with the tree-tops that swell away and away like an emerald green sea. Once we passed a drowned forest standing stark and grey in the water that killed it, the ashen trunks like so many ghosts with withered up-lifted arms. And always that extraordinary silence, like a world holding its breath.

When one thinks of the going out to conquer a tract such as that, one is aghast that any should have dared. To break that ground without any defence against the evils they were letting loose was like performing a

post-mortem upon a plague victim with a pair of scissors and a bottle of eau de cologne. It was said that the Panama railroad cost a man for every tie that was laid.

What the Americans did in 1855 the French repeated in 1880. There was the same bravery, the same magnificent disregard of human life. The French went out and died as fast as they knew how. They died like flies every day, and as fast as they died more Frenchmen, fully aware of what they were going to, went out to fill the gaps. Gilbert, the poet of the Isthmus whose *Panama Patchwork* is known from cover to cover by every man there, and by almost every trader who goes there, has sung of the horrors of the jungle more than once—

"Beyond the Chagres River
Lurks the cougar in his lair,
And ten hundred thousand dangers
Hide in the noxious air.
Behind the trembling leaflets,
Beneath the fallen reeds
Are ever-present perils
Of a million different breeds!"

There is no meaning to that song now in the Canal zone since the man with the white hair and the young face went down to stem the fear that was beginning to drive the employees panic-stricken from the Isthmus in 1905. Thanks to Colonel Gorgas, if you need sanctuary from the yellow fever mosquito it is to be found all along the line from Christobal to Ancon.

On and on the train goes; stopping, letting down, and taking up. Every station is alive with people of every colour. Frijoles, Gorgona, Matachin, Bas Obispo, near which is Camp Elliot, where the marines are stationed, and where the first Stars and Stripes were floated in the zone. As we go through Las Cascadas the Mattchiche ripples out through a window gaily from



A STREET IN EMPIRE CANAL ZONE, PANAMA

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THE CULEBRA CUT, PANAMA CANAL

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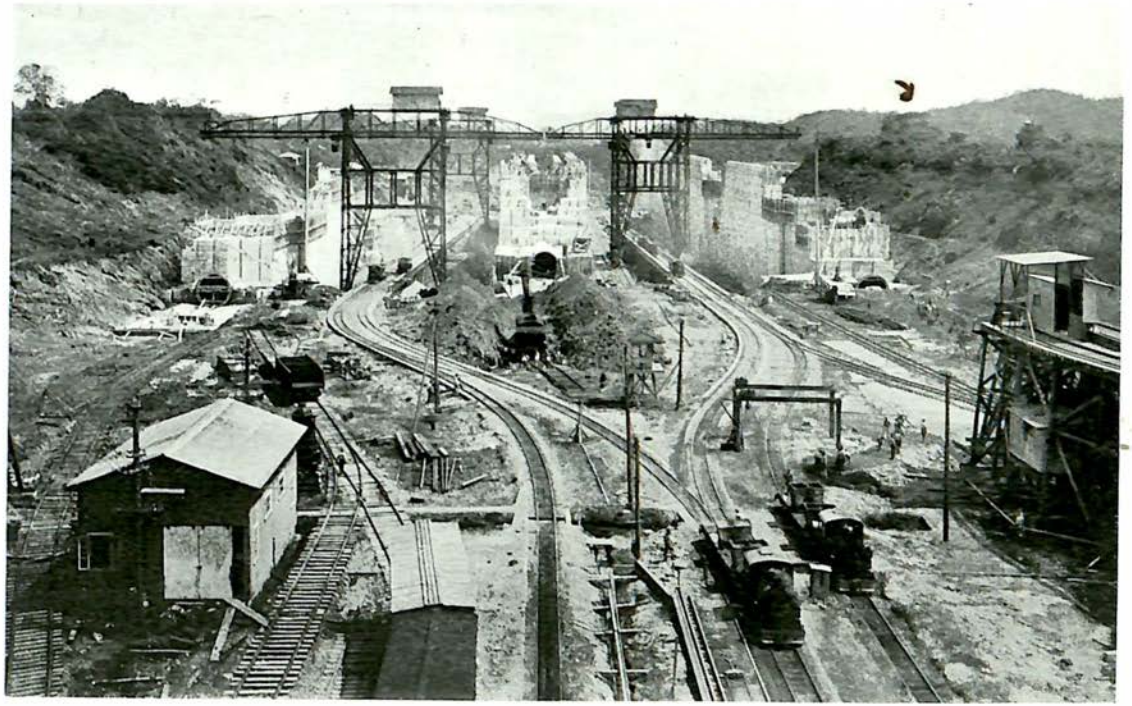
a metal-mouthed gramophone. At Empire, the largest settlement in the zone, the words " Welcome to Empire," done in letters man-size, on a slope behind the platform, greet you hospitably, while on the hill, and all around, flock the gigantic meat-safes of dark gauze in white painted wood frames. I always felt when I went inside those doors that I ought to be given a dish to sit down on.

At last we come to the famous Culebra Cut, the bad child of the family, the unruly member that is holding up the enterprise, and upon whose good behaviour the engineers are not daring to place any real reliance, even when they hope to have whipped it into obedience. They have pierced the dividing range which runs through the Isthmus from the north continent to the south, and the dividing range resents the interference. For as fast as scientific man banks and terraces to keep his beloved and expensive ditch shored up, almost as fast do the obstinate and mutinous mountains kick the earth back again. Nine miles long is the cut, and in that nine miles there are twenty-one slides. The American goes on patiently terracing and cutting off the heads of the adjacent hills; and the adjacent hills go on pushing and kicking the dirt back into the hole like so many naughty children. One knows they will have to give way in the long run, but it is a good fight.

Looking down over the side of the cut into the trench below, the Canal bed is like something seen through the wrong end of a telescope. Backwards and forwards rush the little trains with their tiny loads of dirt and their fussing, snorting little engines; to and fro swing the cranes of the steam shovels biting out their mouthfuls of rock and sand, and disgorging them on to the trucks that wait beneath their tireless maws. And over the

face of everything crawls a swarm of little ants that might be men or men that might be little ants. One feels like Gulliver in Lilliput.

The vision changes as one comes within view of the gigantic walls of the Pedro Miguel and Miraflores locks. The men are as much like ants as ever, but one feels oneself shrinking before the sight of what the ants have achieved. You feel that if the gods have ever left the earth—which I am not quite sure that I believe—they have come back to walk it in industrial roadsteads rather than to idle on Olympus making pompous and vainglorious thunder. That some are engineers and hodmen on the Panama Canal one would scarcely dare to question. And that one has adopted the *nom de guerre* of Colonel George W. Goethals has been an open secret for quite a long time.



PEDRO MIGUEL LOCKS

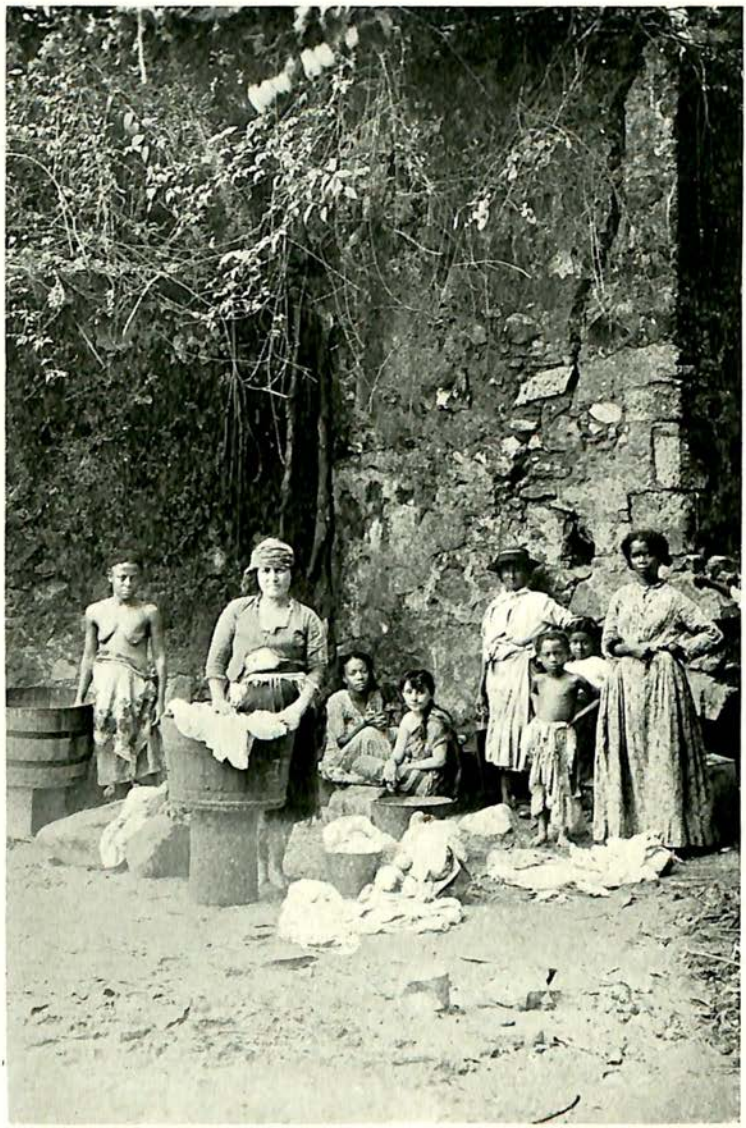
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INTERIOR OF AN OFFICIAL RESIDENCE, CANAL ZONE

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PANAMA CITY



A GROUP OF PANAMANIAN WOMEN

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XXVI

PANAMA CITY

At the railway station everything was confusion. Our luggage had been left behind at Colon, and all we could hope was that it would be sent on by the evening train. Divining trouble when I saw it making no effort to leave the luggage office at Colon Station, I picked up a bag at the last moment, and ran with it to the train. The bag happened to belong to the pretty American, and contained a frock that would make her quite presentable for dinner if the worst happened. I had nothing but the wilted linen dress I had travelled in.

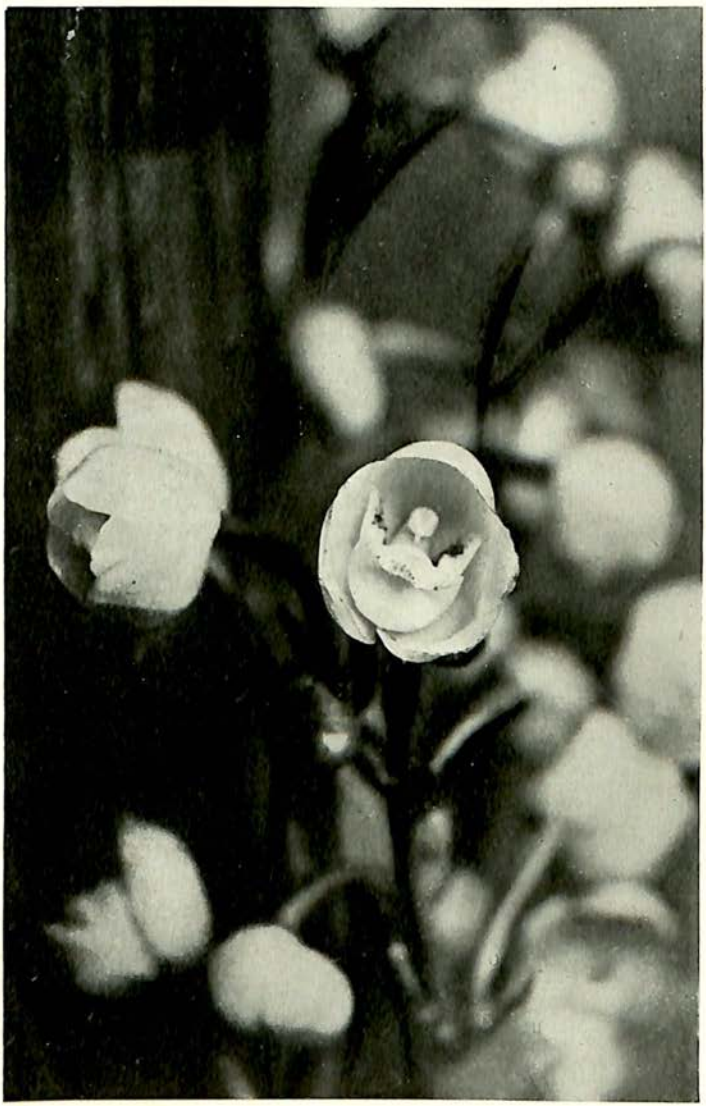
Outside the station stood the ambulance vans that go every day from Ancon Hospital to meet the trains. Tourists were passing through the station gates and filling up the coaches, which in most cases are the same as the Jamaica bus, a sort of covered-in phaeton. We jumped into one, and followed on behind the long stream of vehicles that wound slowly up the curved road that leads to the Tivoli Hotel.

The Tivoli stands on a lower slope of Ancon Hill, and is no more than two or three minutes' walk from the station, which it overlooks. But there, as in Kingston, one rarely walks a score of yards. The ever-present coach is always waiting, and the sun is very hot. Sixpence, or ten cents, makes it so much easier while you have it in your purse. And as soon as you haven't

it in your purse you know it is time to leave Panama. We take our turn, and pull up at the steep wooden steps that lead to the verandah of the hotel.

In the great cool hall crowds of people are sitting and standing and lining up three deep at the booking-office. Negro bell-boys, dressed in the height of certain American fashions, with low-cut, bulldog-toed shoes, tied with sash ribbons, and enormously full trousers turned up at the hem, go ceaselessly up and down the double staircase, carrying bags and showing people to their rooms in the galleries above. Mingling with the din of shuffling feet, of high voices, and the constant banging of the swing wire doors, there comes the clatter of knives and forks and dishes from the big dining-room, on the left of the entrance hall. Lunch has been going for close upon an hour; the tables being set on the verandah as well as in the dining-room. But still the hungry sit and wait in the wicker chairs in the hall, and still the stream flows unbrokenly through the swing doors. I would not like to have to provide three meals a day at the Tivoli when the tourist season is on. There was one night on which 900 people had to be seated and fed.

The name of the hotel is taken from a little rum shanty, called El Tivoli, that was swept away to make room for the enormous building which now occupies the site, and which grows larger and larger even as one tries to sleep. The name has been retained, but not the nature, for nothing more stimulating or exhilarating than ice water or cold tea may be sold within its doors. You may bring in what you like, but it is not in keeping with the dignity of the United States Government to barter drinks for money; and the Tivoli is a part of the wonderful scheme of organization that is the real marvel of the Canal.



THE CELEBRATED SANTO SPIRITO ORCHID OF PANAMA

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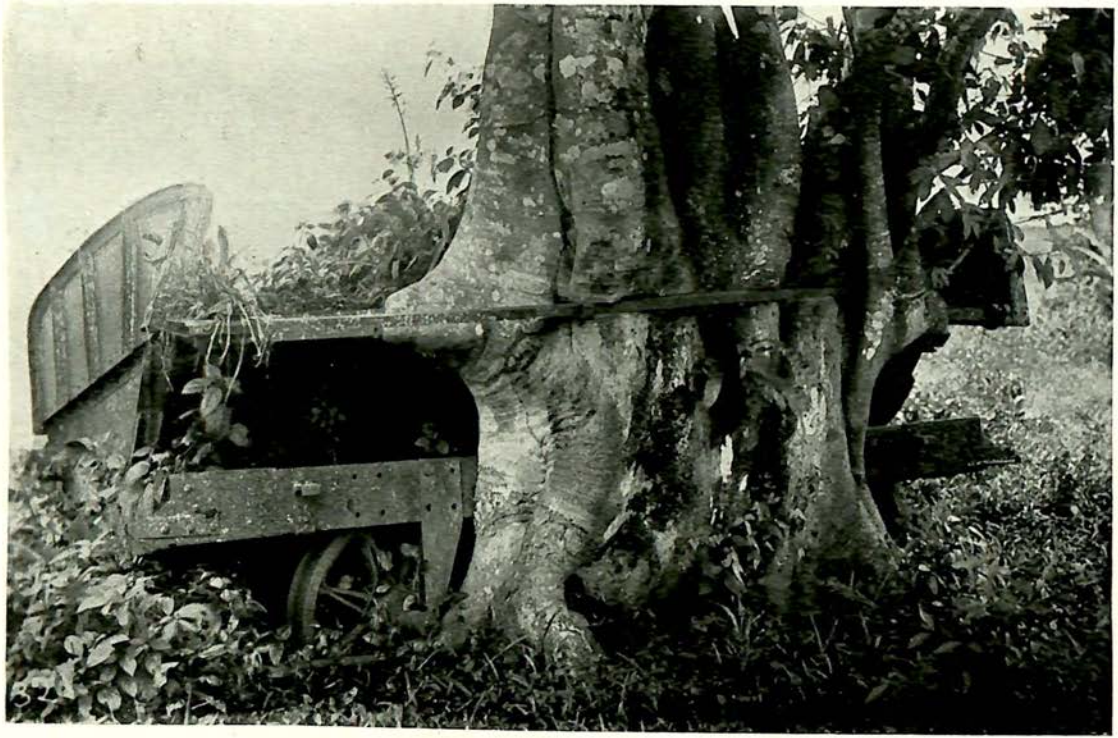
The engineers themselves are the first to admit their indebtedness to the French for the lines along which they are working; and they do not join in the incessant parrot cry of the patriotic tourist whose good-morning and good-night is ever the same: "Here, sir, you see one of the most marvellous engineering feats that the world has ever beheld." But there are not many opinions upon the subject of the controlling and the marshalling of the forces that are employed in the dual effort of making a canal and looking after a transplanted world at the same time.

Moses may have shown an equal genius in shepherding and moving the Children of Israel through the wilderness, with nothing to help him in the way of modern conveniences; but he was not harassed with a gigantic engineering proposition in addition to his transport duty. When you think of 65,000 people—not all of one colour, which certainly increases the difficulties—all waiting impatiently for their breakfast, their lunch, and their dinner, and you remember that nothing is produced in the district whatsoever, you begin to see a little of what has to be thought of in one department alone. Then they have to be clothed, taught, nursed, married, punished, amused, buried, anything that would happen to any other community of 65,000 ordinary human beings. There are the schools, the hospitals, the churches, the law courts; all these may not develop in the gradual manner of growing communities, but must spring fully fledged from the brain of those who are grappling with the problem to serve the immediate necessities of a patch of life that has been cut out of the midst of civilization and transplanted to an almost unbeaten track. America has the right to be proud of her achievement when she sees what she has accomplished since 1904.

The jungle grows miraculously there, and it is no uncommon thing to see good-sized trees rooted in old trucks and engines that had been discarded after the failure of the French in 1889. They are rather mournful sights, these helpless wrecks that once were as active as their puffing, snorting brothers of to-day. They are not even worth scrapping, and they lie stranded and alone; while the busy hum goes on around them, and a quick-fingered Nature spins green shrouds for their winding-sheets. I always felt sorry for Vashti.

It was my good fortune to be taken through the bed of the Canal by Sir Claude Mallet, the Resident British Minister for Panama and Costa Rica, in Colonel Hodge's private car, which he very kindly lent for the occasion. I saw it in the most comfortable way possible, but I came back dazed and stupefied. The things that impressed me most were the overpowering size of the locks and the appalling number of bolts that must have been used to put the gates together. And also the curious manner in which the men and the machines seemed to have changed places; the men had become machines, the machines were uncannily like men. There was an odd semblance in the steam shovel, the most human of all the machines, to Lawson Wood's prehistoric animals, as, on the end of a long neck it craned forth its square head and nibbled away at the sides of the canal. When it opened its great square jaw and spat out the few tons of rock and soil it had so casually bitten off, the likeness was extraordinary.

Of all the towns I visited while I was away, Panama City interested me the most. Kingston, with its shops closing at four o'clock, might have been the city of the dead; San José made very little impression at all, Port-au-Prince was nothing but a rubbish heap, and Colon was merely a landing-stage But Panama City, with



A DERELICT

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THE MARKET ON THE BEACH, PANAMA

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its teeming life, its old Spanish churches and squares, and its huge wall of masonry, under which lie the now disused dungeons of the Chiriqui Prison, was a place that set one thinking. They say that in the city there are forty-eight different nationalities all mixed up together. I saw Spanish, American, Indian, negro, Chinese, and Japanese. Of these kinds there were so many variants, and some were so subtle in their blend, that at last one gave up altogether trying to work it out.

Except for a few of the big stores, the shops were always open till very late at night. After dinner at the hotel we would take an open carriage and drive out bareheaded through the town. The people sat at their doors chatting, with their youngsters playing about their knees. Over the wicket of the bars came the sound of a man or woman singing, for all the bars have their entertainment going on till late at night. Perhaps it would be band night, and the people would gather in the square and sit under the frangipanni trees listening to the music. Or perhaps there would be a Chinese festival. Then there was something doing. The carriages would line up round the kerb of the square and a crowd of people would go blazing by with waving banners and a twisting, writhing dragon in their midst. The noise of the crackers was deafening; fire rained down from heaven and burst out under the feet of your horse; but the Panamanian horse is evidently used to Chinese festivals, because, except for a little restless toss of the head, he makes no protest.

And so it goes on day after day and night after night. As we pass by a cantina at the corner of a square, suddenly there is a pistol shot from upstairs. The men sitting at the tables start and look at one another, and some loiterers upon the pavement gather at the

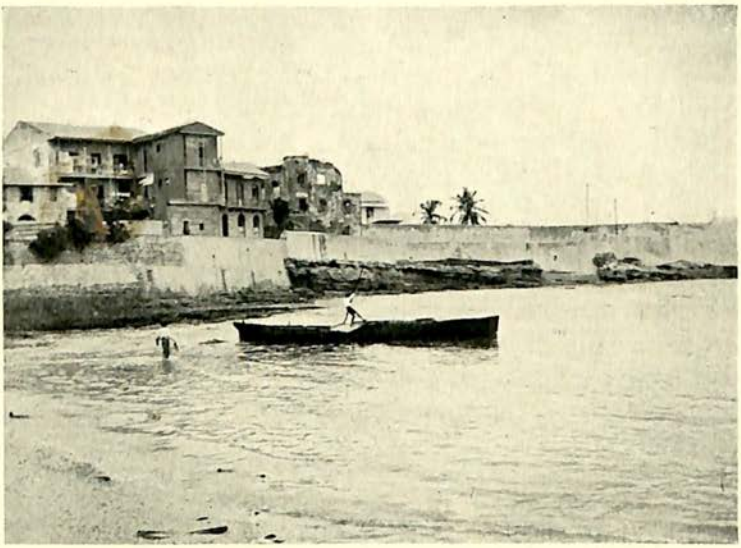
entrance. Only the man who is serving the drinks is undisturbed. He goes on serenely polishing the glass in his hand. This place is known as one where such things as pistol shots have been heard before with rather grim results. It behoves the barman to keep his head lest a panic should attract the law. Our driver is not unduly moved, and shrugs his shoulders when we ask him what it means. We leave the town and cross the bridge that leads through Kalidonia to the Sabanas beyond. There is a limit to the safety of this lovely, lonely drive, but, even if one did not know it, one need not be afraid to go too far, for the horses know it. We drive on and on in the soft scented night, with the stars above us and the plains opening dim and dark around us. All at once the horses stop dead and will go no farther. We turn and drive back to the city.



THE FAMOUS FLAT ARCH IN THE RUINED CHURCH OF SAN DOMINGO, PANAMA

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THE CHIRIQUI PRISON



OLD WALL ROUND CHIRIQUI PRISON, PANAMA CITY



A QUIET CORNER

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XXVII

THE CHIRIQUI PRISON

I WALKED several times round the walls of the Chiriqui prison, and each time I felt more curious about the inside of it. From Las Bovedas, the walk at the top of the sea-wall, one could look straight down into it, and from that distance it seemed a fairly cheerful place: a large open courtyard with buildings round three sides of it and a garden in the middle; and at the end by the sea-wall a space railed off for a drying-ground, where linesful of garments blew airily about in the breeze. Women moved about the drying-ground, pegging out clothes, and at the other end of the courtyard men in horizontally striped brown and khaki-coloured garments went backwards and forwards at will, or sat under the verandah placidly playing cards and amusing themselves as they pleased best.

And this in a place that had the reputation of being a den of the worst description, a charnel-house with dreadful dungeons that ran out under the sea, in which poor wretches were allowed to lie rotting with fever and filth till they were fortunate enough to die.

Then one day, when I had no more than twenty minutes to spare, some one offered, as we went by, to take me in. It is necessary to have on all days but Sundays and holidays a written order, but the man who was with me knew the governor of the gaol

personally, and had only to ask for him at the gates to be allowed entrance.

We went through. The gate was wide open, and a guard stood on either side of it. Just outside, a striped gentleman stood chatting with very much the air of a cottager at his homely wicket. Inside there were more Panamanian guards very much at ease, and a lot more prisoners. My friend asked for the governor, and three or four men smiled good-naturedly through the bars of a cell beside us, and chattered instructions as to where he was to be found. The doors of the cells stood open, and as we waited for the governor I stood at the entrance of one and looked in. It was no more formidable than a large airy room, very bare and clean. In one corner a man stood at an easel painting. He was taking his view through the window, and was far too absorbed in his work to take the slightest notice of our intrusion. On a canvas stretcher placed with the foot end to the wall, and on the far side of the room, a man lay with his hands clasped under his head and his knees up. He had three pillows tucked under his head, one with a frilled pillow-case on it. While I was looking at him the governor came up, a tall, lean American with a hatchet face. He was in his shirt-sleeves and the usual wide-awake hat. After I had been introduced, and as we were turning away from the door, I stopped to have another look at the man on the bed; the frilled pillow-case fascinated me.

"That man," I said in an undertone to the governor, "the one on the bed; is he ill?"

The governor turned back and looked through the doorway, then he smiled.

"Why, no," he said gently, "I guess he's only a bit tired."

We went rather hurriedly through. I had very little

time, and I wanted to see the women. The cells were scrupulously clean, and there was a fresh, healthy smell of tar pervading everything. It seemed to come from the solitary confinement cell, which had evidently just been painted with pitch from roof to floor. That particular apartment perplexed me rather, and I was sorry that I forgot to ask the governor to explain it to me. It was on the same roomy scale as the others, and had eight rings in the walls. I don't suppose they would have put eight rings unless they had meant to accommodate eight people. And if eight people, why a solitary confinement cell?

The governor had been installed no more than three or four months before our visit, and it was he who had made the prison the clean, comfortable, healthy place that it was when I saw it. He said that when he went in, there were thirty odd cases of beri-beri fever, and the dead rats and filth had to be taken out of the cells in cart-loads. Now the fever cases had been reduced to one, and every cell was as clean as a hospital ward.

It seemed ridiculous to call the big light rooms cells. At night with the doors closed, I suppose they looked more like it; but in the daytime, with the doors open and the sunlight flooding in through the large windows—barred, of course, but not high up or narrow—they suggested nothing grim or forbidding. Compared with the sunless tombs of more advanced countries the place was a garden city.

In one room half-a-dozen women were washing clothes. A baby sat on a rug on the floor. I went over and spoke to it. One of the women smiled, but the others took no notice of us. In the doorway stood an under-sized half-breed girl of thirteen, older-looking by a dozen years than her age, and sullen-eyed. Poor little thing, she hadn't

started very well. At ten she had killed her lover, and had already served three years of her life sentence.

We went across to the governor's house, a high wooden building on the opposite side of the court; beside it was a room looking out on to the ground where the clothes were drying.

"There's a girl in there," said the governor; "if you'd like to go in and see her we'll wait here."

The door was open. I knocked and stood for a moment looking into the room. There was a table with a coloured cloth in the middle of it, a sewing machine, some pictures on the walls, some easy enough chairs, and a little white Pom with a blue ribbon round its neck.

"Come in," called a voice, and I entered.

On a camp stretcher, with a screen round the head, lay a nice-looking, fresh-faced American girl of about twenty-two or three. She had a book in her hand, and another lay on the little table beside her bed. It was called *His Hour*, by Elinor Glyn. She smiled as I went up to her.

"May I talk to you for a few minutes?" I said, sitting down in a chair that stood near.

"Why, yes, do," she said, in the soft nasal drawl that is one of the least unpleasant of the American intonations, and which has a close likeness to the sing-song of the Cornish peasant; and we talked about nothing in particular for a few moments, I wondering what had brought such a nice, frank, commonplace girl into such very uncommonplace quarters, but not liking to ask.

Presently she said something about her sentence, and I asked how long it was. She told me; three years, and she had already served ten months.

"What was it for?" I ventured, hoping she wouldn't snub me.

"Killing a woman," she said placidly.

I stared at her: she did look so unlike her story.

"I say! that wasn't a very nice thing to do, was it?"

She smiled. "Oh, well," she said pleasantly, "you've got to do it sometimes. If I hadn't done it to her she'd have done it to me."

There were footsteps on the verandah of the house next door. I was very late already. I stood up. "I'm awfully sorry, but I've got to go now," I said. "Would you like me to come in and see you again?"

She smiled up into my face with real good-will in her eyes.

"Why, I'd be tickled to death," she said.

"All right, I will. Good-bye, and I hope you'll soon be better." I went out and left her to her books and the little white Pom. She seemed very comfortable.

On the way to the gate the governor told me about her. She was a very good girl in the gaol, never gave any trouble, and was quite easy to manage. She had had a row with a woman in a house in the red-light district in Colon, and had killed her. It had been a question of defending herself, and in the defence the other woman got the worst of it, that was all. As she said, "If I hadn't killed her she would have killed me."

Four months after, when I was passing through Panama on my way to Bocas del Toro, I went to see her. The governor met me at the gate, and we walked slowly through the flower-beds of the courtyard, talking as we went. He came with me as far as his house, and then left me to pay my call alone. She was still in the same quarters, but quite well this time and fully dressed. She was standing by the table with some pins in her mouth; she had been fitting a muslin jacket on to a

woman who went out of the room as I went in. Her face lighted up.

"Do you remember me?" I asked.

"Why, yes," she said; "I knew it was you directly you came into the yard. I thought you'd come again."

I asked her what she was doing, and she said she was allowed to take orders for dressmaking, and she hoped to make some money in that way so that she would have something by her when she went out. She had ambitions of finding her way to Paris and doing dressmaking there Everything was speculative. She did a thing that made me like her very much. When she told me of her idea about Paris, it occurred to me that she might find herself in straits. If she was the sort of girl I thought, it would be an easy thing to help her. I said as much. In a flash she turned and looked at me sharply.

"You know where I was before?" she said.

"Yes," I said; "why?"

She nodded, as much as to say she was satisfied. "There are some who wouldn't help me if they knew," she answered, "and I thought I'd tell you."

It was pretty decent of her when you come to think of it. She needn't have spoken of it, or she could have played the penitent for the purpose of "getting" me. As it was she stood to lose. She told me her story, and it sounded quite believable. She was from the States. A little while before she came to Panama she had divorced her husband. Instead of investing the money paid to her in a business, she, as she said, "played the fool," and spent it enjoying herself. When it came to an end she found herself in Colon without a penny—not the best place in the world to find yourself stranded, and one in which it would not be very easy to find a choice of professions. She took the one which is always easy and always open so long as you are neither too old nor

too ugly. She was neither too old nor too ugly; and there you have it.

"You won't go back to it when you leave here?" I asked. It seemed such a pity.

She looked thoughtful and did not answer for a moment.

"Not if I can get anything else to do," she said gravely, but I could see that it was the inevitable alternative. One felt that if dressmaking did not prove unkind she would quite cheerfully be a pleasant, law-abiding dressmaker And if it did, well, the others would be waiting at the gate to take her out. The governor told me that. They knew, he said, where she was and when her time was up. And they wanted her.

It happened that while I was at the Tivoli Hotel a White Slave case was being tried in the Canal Zone Court, and I was taken to hear it. A man suspected of bringing two women out from Southampton had been arrested on one of the mail steamers when it arrived in Colon. The man had been tried and sentenced the day before to a year's imprisonment; the women were on their trial the day I visited the court.

Apparently the whole thing was as clear as daylight. The man had been sentenced, I think, upon another charge. It was obvious that he had brought the women out, and brought them out for that purpose, but the women were trying to prove that they had no knowledge of the man at all. Their story was that they had come out to buy a business in Panama, that it had proved to be more costly than they could afford, and that they had ultimately gone into the house in which they were found instead of returning home. If they could prove that, they could stay where they were, for in Panama their profession was a licensed one. If they couldn't, it meant transportation.

I couldn't help feeling sorry for them, and in the face of things it seemed a waste of time to interfere. For the creature who entices children and destroys innocence there is nothing in the way of torture or punishment that is bad enough. But these women were neither young nor innocent. One felt that they belonged to their profession as much as a sailor belongs to his. To hinder them was not in any way to advance morality, it only meant that they had the annoyance and discomfort of moving away somewhere else, and where they had been stopped others would slip through. Panama was not going to be any cleaner, the women were not going to be any more virtuous, and the only thing brought about by their transportation would be that they would have less territory to be immoral in. They would have to go back to Southampton, and begin afresh in an overstocked market with an extra handicap. There may be very little sentiment in that view of it, but there was very little sentiment in the situation.

What interested me most was the extraordinary difference in the three women, who were all doing the same thing. Of the two in court, one was a French milliner from a street off Tottenham Court Road, and the other an English servant-girl from Hampstead; and the girl in Chiriqui prison a nice lower middle-class American of no profession at all. For the Frenchwoman one felt no pity and a certain amount of respect. Trim, well-corsetted in a corsetless country, her hair smartly dressed, her face carefully made up, she commanded respect through the respect she showed herself. All through her cross-examination she lied very heartily. Her eyes sparkled with anger, and her foot tapped the floor impatiently. Her attitude was one of acute indignation at this unwarrantable intrusion into her own private affairs. One felt that her trade was a

matter quite apart from herself personally. Later on, when she had made enough money, she would very likely go back to France and live a perfect respectable life in the country. These English-speaking fools, who were spoiling her business and wasting her time, she eyed them resentfully, and her foot beat the ground—it was intolerable!

The servant-girl from Hampstead called for all one's pity and none of one's respect. Untidy, slatternly, she made you feel that she would have been little use either as a servant or a prostitute. Her hair was twisted up anyhow, her dress disordered. She made purposeless, bewildered movements with her pasty-white, irritating hands, and looked helplessly around her like an animal that is seeking an escape. As I watched her I felt a sudden resentment surge up in me against her. She was so meaningless. She must have exasperated her past mistresses, she would bore her present masters. And just as suddenly a great pity for her came over me. Inefficient, incapable, with just enough wit to tell her how uncomfortable she was without showing her a way out, she would go under like a paper boat in a whirlpool. She wasn't even going to get a run for her money. She was done before she was begun. As she talked there, alternately brazen and cowed, she was alienating her hearers by her shrinking, flaunting futility.

And the American girl, with good-natured acceptance of things as they were, whether they turned out dress-making or the other thing, she apparently had no more sexual morality than the other two, yet she affected one very much as a nice morning does; she seemed clean and nice and fresh. What made the difference? Was it the point of view?

Of the three women, possibly the only one that would come through in the end would be the Frenchwoman,

whose philosophy seemed to be handed to her straight from the great Ninon herself. The body? It was a very small thing to give: the mind was the only thing that really counted. Her body should in youth gather for her the comforts both physical and spiritual that her middle age should need. Therefore it was a thing to keep in good order and to sell as well as possible.

As for the English girl, whose accent proclaimed her from the Midlands, her philosophy would most likely be a blend of rigid Nonconformity and penny novelettes. The one would tell her that once down was down eternally; and the other, that a life of pleasure meant sequined dresses and music-halls whenever she liked to ask them. On her lean days of Nonconformity the sequined dresses would dazzle till they got her, and in her sequined moments of depression the Nonconformist training would show her the depths into which she was once and for ever plunged. There might be a way back if you allowed yourself to be rescued, and gave yourself to washing clothes till the angel of death came to free you from your penance. Would it be worth going back to that? Not while there was still drink in the world and the chance of some one paying for it.

And the American? I don't think she *had* any philosophy. She just saw a situation and wondered what would be the best thing to do. If the time has arrived for her to choose, I hope it is the best she has chosen, whatever it may be, because she was a nice little thing.

ROUND ABOUT THE TOWN

XXVIII

ROUND ABOUT THE TOWN

I WAS in Panama City twice; the first time in March, when the tourist season was on, and the second time during the first week in July, when the Presidential elections were turning the city into a battle-field.

I was on my way to the banana plantations of Bocas del Toro, about a hundred and sixty miles further along the coast towards Limon, and I arranged my visit so that I should be in Panama City during the election week; for I had heard that it was a week of bloody battles, and I wanted to see what they would be like.

The steamer from Jamaica arrived at Colon on the afternoon of June the 30th, the afternoon of the first election, which was the day on which the issue was practically decided—and a Sunday.

It was a day dreary enough to have damped the fervour of the fiercest enthusiast. Rain, rain, rain; a grey mist upon the hills, and the town dank and dripping. Being election day there were no customs to pass, and we got through quickly to the train. Everything was quiet, which was scarcely to be wondered at, for the place was under the double influence of martial law and pouring rain. The journey across the Isthmus was not inspiriting. Being a Sunday there was no work going on, and being a wet Sunday, there were hardly any people about. As we went through Monte

Lirio, that encampment of twenty-nine disused railway cars fitted with wire doors, some of the men came out on to their stoops to see the train go by; but very quickly they turned and went inside again. Certainly it is livelier sitting snug inside your own railway carriage under the light of a red-shaded lamp than it is standing out in the rain watching a train crawl through a dripping, sodden jungle.

When we got to Panama City things were a good deal more interesting, but a little difficult. The streets were barricaded, and hardly a vehicle was to be seen. One or two cabs stood by the curb, but the drivers contemptuously refused to take any notice of the signs made to them. I hailed several, but all they did was to shake their heads and walk slowly by. I don't know whether it was their idea of a holiday to sit all day on the box and do nothing, or whether they were holding themselves in readiness for electioneers; but certainly they had no use for the hotel visitors. I had only a very small case in my hand and it was no distance across the grass to the hotel, but I was in a muslin frock and the rain was still falling. And also it did not please me to walk for three minutes through grass-pudding in a pair of thin suede shoes. I made a last attempt with a statue in his chariot near by.

"Will you drive me to the Tivoli?" I asked.

He looked at me for a moment without speaking; then at last he said with the greatest indignation in his voice—

"Don't you see I'm busy?"

I didn't give in.

"Perhaps you wouldn't mind stopping being busy for two minutes and driving me?" I suggested.

For answer he stared at me without replying.

"Imbecile!" his eyes said extinguishingly as he

hitched himself together more securely on his box and gazed out away from me up the street.

I looked over towards the hotel and measured the mud that separated me from it. There was nothing for it but to walk. Just as I was about to cross the road a tumult began. Down the Avenida Central came a surging mass of men yelling and shouting. As they swept up to where I was standing I saw in their midst a poor wretch with blood streaming from his face. He was simply being kicked about like a football. At once the loiterers at the corners joined the pack. Two little Panamanian policemen who had apparently gone in higher up the Avenida to stem the torrent were being swept along in it like sticks in a mill-race. Opposite me, and blocking the road to the hotel, they seemed to have got clogged, for the fight went on furiously for a while under my eyes. When I saw them moving again towards the bridge that leads to Kalidonia, I made a dash for the other side of the road, but no sooner was I half-way across than the tide set back again and I had to put lightning into my heels to escape being caught in the swirl of it. I did not a bit want to look like the poor man who seemed to be the cause of the disturbance, nor the little policeman who had already lost his helmet.

I gained the other side of the street in safety, and made my way up to the hotel. Down the road from Ancon hill came another crowd, this an orderly one—of necessity; for heading the procession and marshalling it on either side walked the puttee-legged, khaki-clad, Stetson-hatted Canal Zone policemen—a blessed and peaceful sight in a community that seemed desirous of no prettier diversion than the splitting-open of adversaries' heads on any provocation whatsoever. I was not sorry when I and my bag and my soaking shoes found ourselves in the now familiar hotel.

Coming in out of the rain and the dusk and the uproar, there was something very homely about the big lighted hall with its pillars and its wicker chairs and its double staircase; and the man at the desk smiled and nodded as much as to say, " Glad to see you back." That may have only been a comfortable conceit on my part, but in a very strange land comfortable conceits are not at all bad things to have.

The morning after election day was quite peaceful. The barricades were still up in the streets at certain points, but the cabs were plying as usual and perfectly willing to take your twenty cents silver from you for a lift along the road.

When I went out first to the West Indies, that differentiation between gold and silver was very mystifying. In Jamaica it has very little meaning, for although the Jamaican coinage is sometimes different from the English, yet its standard value is the same, and only English and American money is used. In the other places that I visited I learnt it quickly enough. The gold standard was American, the silver the coinage of the country. In Panama two Panamanian dollars go to the American dollar; in Costa Rica, roughly speaking, two colones; and in Haiti, while I was there, about three gourdes, but there the exchange varied from day to day. I heard the proprietors of the hotel say one day, " I wish I'd bought some money to-day." At one time the exchange was as high as eight gourdes to the dollar, but keeps on getting lower and lower, and there is a talk of it being made dollar for dollar. In Panama I was all right. I knew I had only to halve the price to find out the cost, but in the other places I gave it up and handed over my finances to some one who had a better brain than I.

In Panama too—in the Canal Zone—the term gold or

silver was a pretty general way of saying white or coloured. There was the same line of demarcation in the Zone as the American makes in his own country. Over the doorways of the Commissaries were the words, "Entrance for Gold Employees," and "Entrance for Silver Employees." The restaurants were designated in the same way, and also the trucks or carriages on the workmen's trains. Another grading which was made of the workers by some wit in the Zone is brilliant enough to go into Canal archives. "There are," it is said, "three kinds: the workies, the clerkies and the shirkies." The workies begin at seven o'clock in the morning, the clerkies at eight, and the shirkies at nine. That is one of the things I would like to have said myself.

The Chinese and Japanese stores are the most interesting shops in Panama City. I bought a good many things at them that I know I could have got just as well at Liberty's, but it is a dreadful thing to come away from a famous place empty-handed. However keenly I used my wits against theirs, however much they in their incomparable serenity reduced the prices, I knew I was being had half-a-dozen times over by these silent, dignified creatures, who seemed rather to be honouring you by allowing you to look upon their wares. There is no unseemly advertising of the ivories and silks and embroideries that fill their show-cases; each article, of virtue or otherwise, simply sits proudly in its own allotted space, a silent testimony to its own superlative value. Only in one instance had one of the proprietors broken through his proud reserve to tell of the merits of his wares, and this perhaps because the ware itself was of so diminutive a size that it might too easily be passed over among its more showy companions. On a piece of cardboard in letters of indian ink was written this simple inscription—

SANDAL-WOOD OIL

IT VANISH ALL KINDS OF BAD SMELLINGS. NONE ANY KIND OF PERFUME WOULD EQUAL THE SAME EFFECT FOR THAT PURPOSE.

10 CENTS GOLD FOR ONE BOTTLE

The children about the town make any street a diversion. There is no false shame about them, no craven consciousness of how they are looking or what people are thinking about them. They dress in whatever comes first, and if their garment annoys or hampers them they take it off. What could be simpler? I have seen a company of Adams and Eves of all shades, from chocolate to pale coffee, on its happy way along the pavement; such strutting little gallants as you never saw, wearing their nakedness superbly in the teaming midst of a starched and goffered community. Who cares? Not they, bless them! One had started out in his shirt, but before long a pause was made and the encumbrance was quickly whisked off him and used as a standard to rally under. I watched them gaily turn the corner out of sight, the banner waving joyously over them. It would seem as if the next greatest pleasure to clothes is no clothes at all.

One lovely picture comes into my mind as I think of the rascals. A quiet street, an open door with a rather deep step from the passage to the pavement; and to the doorway comes stealthily a black, black baby, his eyes big with purpose, his shining little body naked as it was born except for an enormous pair of carpet slippers hooked on to his ridiculous feet. To get out into the street is his supreme desire. He comes to the edge of the step and looks down, but the descent is too perilous. Carefully and laboriously he shuffles towards the frame

of the doorway, and clinging with all his might to its support he lowers his body and advances one foot over the precipice. Quickly it is hauled back; the slipper nearly went that time! You can see the great eyes growing bigger with the fright of it. He pulls himself together and has another look over the edge. This time ever so carefully he slowly lowers the other leg and the same thing happens. P-whew! That was a close shave! If we had a handkerchief in our pockets we would mop our brows, but we haven't got any pockets. Pretty nerve-destroying work this, getting off steps into streets with contraband goods aboard. My carriage turns the corner and he is lost to me: for a moment I am desolate. If all sights were as enchanting as that one!

I was driven out one afternoon to Old Panama, the city which was sacked by that very unpleasant buccaneer for whom we are responsible, Captain Henry Morgan. There is an account, given by a certain John Esquemeling,[1] who was one of the pirate band, of Morgan's raids in Panama; and although the chronicler has no quarrel against the man who led them, he tells nothing in his story that gives one the slightest quickening of interest for him. One does not look for all the virtues in a buccaneer, but one looks for some if he is to stir our pulses. At best he is a glorified thief; but if he be a debonair thief, with a smattering of generous deeds, there is a niche for him in the gallery of merry knaves.

Of Morgan it does not seem to be recorded that he had anything but a thirst for money. He seems to be no boys' hero, raiding for the love of conquest and gilding his outlawry with flashes of knight-errantry and acts of careless generosity. It was money, money,

[1] From *Buccaneers of America*, published by Swan, Sonnenschein & Co., London.

money. He raided and sacked and burnt and tortured; and then, when he'd had enough, he sat down in Jamaica as governor of the island, spent his time putting spokes in the wheels of all the poor hard-working pirates who were trying to get a living in the field he had quitted, and died an honest man! If I had not a mild reputation to keep up in the matter of words, I would say what I feel about him. He is my beau-ideal of a rotter.

There is a quaint description given about the eating of some leather bags, the only things the pirates could find for food at a certain point of their march. Esquemeling says they fell upon them and began to eat, "being desirous to afford something to the ferment of their stomachs, which now was grown so sharp that it did gnaw their very bowels, having nothing else to prey upon. Thus they made a huge banquet upon these bags of leather, which doubtless had been more grateful unto them, if divers quarrels had not risen concerning who should have the greatest share."

After this they march still further and still find nothing.

"Here again," says Esquemeling, "he was happy that had reserved, since noon, any small piece of leather whereof to make his supper, drinking after it a good draught of water for his greatest comfort. Some persons, who were never out of their mothers' kitchens may ask how these Pirates could eat, swallow and digest those pieces of leather so hard and dry. To whom I only answer, that could they once experience what hunger, or rather famine, is they would certainly find the manner, by their own necessity, as the Pirates did. For these first took the leather and sliced it in pieces. Then they did beat it between two stones and rub it, often dipping it in the water of the river, to render it by this means supple and tender. Lastly they scraped off the hair and roasted or broiled it upon the fire. And



ALL THAT MORGAN LEFT OF OLD PANAMA

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being thus cooked they cut it into small morsels and ate it, helping it down with frequent gulps of water, which by good fortune they had near at hand."

Of Old Panama, five miles from the present city, very little remains to tell of its former prosperity. There are a few mines, but the vegetation is so dense round about them that it is difficult to see them except from a distance. The tower and walls of the cathedral are standing, and further away some other walls that are said to be the walls of the monastery. One feels, regretfully, that in time everything will be cleaned up and made tidy, and that turnstiles will let you through to the ruins at so much a head, with half-price for children and a soft drink pagoda near by. But now one is able to stand and watch it and dream about it undisturbed by any ugly modernism. Everything here is desolate and forgotten. Birds fly in and out through the great empty windows of the cathedral, and the thick jungle wraps it round. The sand is grey and the waves wash ceaselessly up on a mournful grey beach. One looks at the walls. There must be many secrets in that forgotten corner lying under those green shrouds; secrets that have been kept for nearly three hundred years. Inside the cathedral walls they say the natives still bury their dead, but they are the only disturbers of that melancholy place. Overhead stretches the great blue ceiling of the world, and a little breeze sings itself to sleep among the leaves of the palms. It would be a pity to have the turnstiles.

ALMIRANTE AND THE BANANA PLANTATIONS

XXIX

ALMIRANTE AND THE BANANA PLANTATIONS

A SOFT rain dimpling the still grey lagoon, a little idle sail like a resting butterfly; pale sunlight upon the wooded hills and a great white steamer slipping away through the coral islands to the sea beyond. That is Almirante Lagoon from the balcony on which I lived all the day long when I went to visit the banana districts of Panama.

Just across the water is Shepherd's Island, which, one day when Almirante ceases to be the lovely intimate encampment it is now, will very probably be a coaling station. Now it is an enchanted wood asleep upon a silver lake. In future times, when all the world is eaten up by commercialism, when every forest is a manufacturing town and every sea-coast an asphalt parade, such places as this will be sung of as Camelot is sung of now. There will be strange stories, told into the ears of listening children, of a lake whose waters were so still and so clear that one might look deep down and see as through a sheet of glass the wonders that were strewn upon the floor below. Deep down into drowned forests of feathery white coral where dwelt great gleaming silver fish with jewelled backs. In this world of enchantment green woods ringed the water round that no tempest from the sea should hurt it; and high dark mountains overshadowed it. There

were islands enough for every boy to be a king who wanted, and Indians to beware of—gentle Indians who burnt charcoal and sold milk coconuts beseechingly; but that does not come into the story. On a coral-filled strip away in one corner of the lagoon lived a colony of white men who built for themselves houses with bath-rooms and ice-chests, and who ate the food that was brought down from strange countries in the great white monsters that majestically and silently passed through the lake and back again; but with them the real inhabitants had no dealing. The white men kept to themselves, plied their trade and left the islands undisturbed. They were landsmen, not vikings, and no sagas were for them. They might know an Indian trail here and there, and they had learnt in their journeyings to and from their other stronghold at the Mouth of the Bull to navigate in small steamships a certain pass (difficult and avoided by them at night-time) between two reefs; but that made of them neither kings nor sailors. They were tradesmen, that was all, and as inoffensive tradesmen they were permitted to go their way. The kings and the vi-kings had greater work to do than harry pedlars.

That is the lagoon as I saw it and knew it, although for honesty's sake I must admit I stayed with the pedlars and not with the kings.

The banana plantations of the United Fruit Company in Panama lie on the other side of the Almirante Lagoon, which is entered at Bocas del Toro, one hundred and forty miles along the coast from Colon. The town of Bocas del Toro, a little island to itself, is built on piles, and until a few years ago the tide used to rise and fall twice a day right over it. Later it was filled in, and a concrete wall built round it: and now it stands



A SIDE STREET IN THE TOWN OF BOCAS DEL TORO
(The headquarters of the United Fruit Company's offices in Panama)

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LOADING BANANAS INTO LIGHTERS

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a proud two feet above high-water mark. When I saw it first it reminded me for all the world of a handful of painted toys floating on a tea-tray in the bath, and the two-foot sea-wall looked no more than the rim that kept the tray from going under.

Before the Changuinola Railway was built the fruit used to be carried down to Bocas in lighters and loaded on to the steamers there. But now Bocas is merely the official headquarters of the company and the trains bring their freight direct to the wharf at Almirante, and load straight from the box-cars into the hold. And the great six-thousand-ton ships having got their bill of health at Bocas del Toro and passed the time of day to all the launches that come out to call upon them, turn majestically and make their way across the thirteen miles of island-dotted lake to the corner where Almirante, a town of three years and as many buildings, sits dabbling her placid young feet in the water. Often I used to stand on the balcony and watch the stately white things come up delicately between the little islands; and I used to laugh, for they reminded me of nothing so much as a cat picking its way through a tableful of crockery. A false step, and there most certainly would have been a smash. But has any one ever seen a cat break a piece of china that way? I have once, but the cat did it on purpose. A tableful of china is no more to a cat than a crowded ball-room is to a good dancer. And as I watched I used to wonder whether the captain, if he bumped into an island and broke it off its coral stem, would have the sense to fish it up and use it for a table decoration. One of those little islands would have made a very nice table-centre, and in water it would have lasted quite a long time.

Of all romances the romance of trade seems to be the greatest. One buys a banana in London, or anywhere

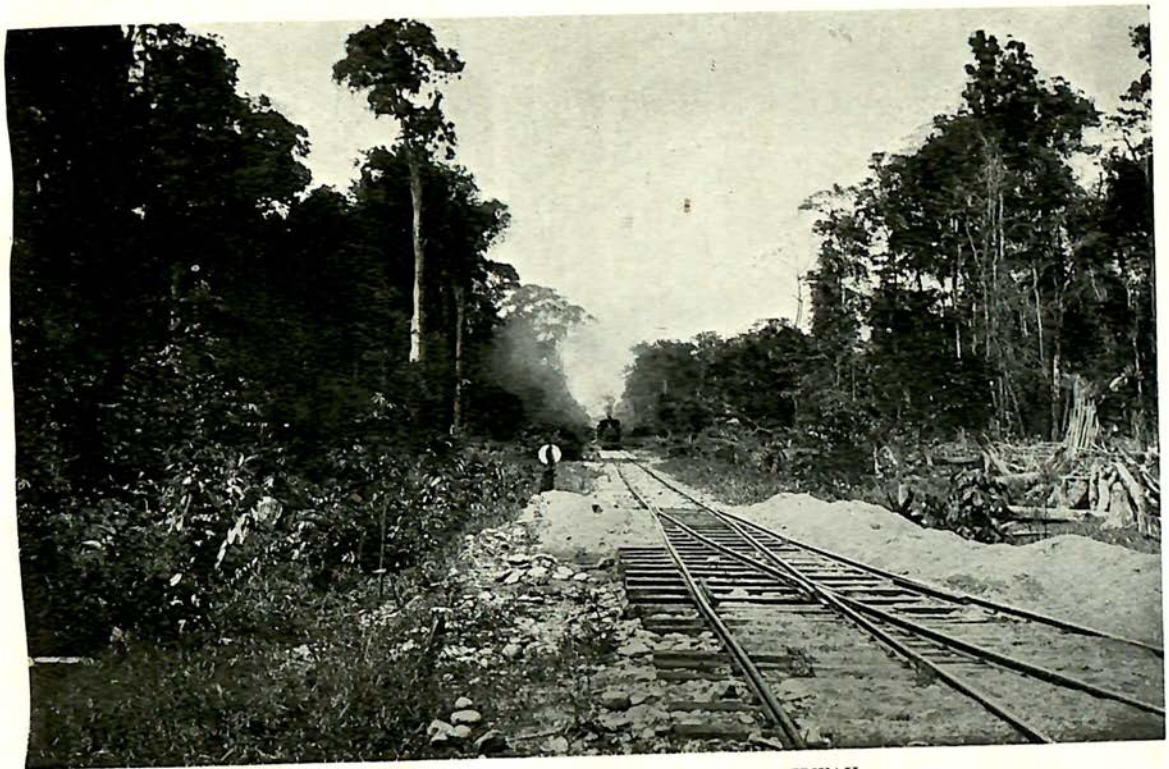
else where bananas do not grow, and if it is a good banana, one thinks no more about it. To suddenly stop and begin to enumerate the industries that have been called up to make it possible to buy that banana is to court madness. You might just as well throw a stone in a pond and try to count the ripples. A banana in London or New York means, directly, fleets of ships and miles of railways built for no other purpose than the carrying of that particular fruit. Indirectly it means a thousand things. The banana ships carry passengers and a few other things beside, but first and foremost and last and always, they are built for bananas. In the matter of transport, that the passenger is late does not stir the pulses of any one, but for the banana to be overdue would cause a hundred thousand merchant men to ask the reason why. From Almirante, the port of the Panama district, there radiates over a hundred and fifty miles of railway called into being for no other reason than to carry bananas. Four or five million bunches go from there every year to the American market; four or five million bunches that are treated with all the care that would be given to a stableful of racehorses or an incubator-ful of babies, and that are graded by experts as if they were so many precious stones. For those bananas we pay a penny each; and out of the growing and picking and carrying of them, thousands of men are living comfortably, and not a few are making fortunes.

What the Panama Canal has been doing for a dozen years in the forty-nine-mile strip, the fruit companies have been doing all over Central America for twice the time. Wherever they go they take their world with them. On Frances Cay, two miles across the water from Bocas del Toro, is a fully equipped hospital that is more like a rich man's castle than a



THE UNITED FRUIT COMPANY'S HOSPITAL AT NANCE'S CAY
(A little island in the Almirante Lagoon close to Bocas del Toro)

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THROUGH THE JUNGLE, CHARGUINOLA RAILWAY

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hospital, and situated in surroundings of such beauty that you ask yourself more than once if it really can be true. The same marvel of organization is there, the same attention to the everyday wants of man. Yet everything around is so primitive that in Almirante if you wish to go for a walk you must take a launch ride. There is the railway track, it is true, but it is rough work picking your way between the sleepers, and watching for engines is a self-conscious enjoyment. Beyond that there is not a road nor a path anywhere. Miles away across the mangrove swamps and over the hills, the Indians have made a trail here and there that carries them through the mountains; but those trails are not for ordinary people, and the average white man does well to stay by his launch or his railway line.

For all that one may sit down to a dinner at night that begins with oysters on the shell from New York, includes an English pheasant, and ends with an ice that might have come from the Carlton. "Feed the brute" is not only the Frenchwoman's method of keeping her husband's love; it is the American's way of enduring his life in the jungle. And a very good way too. He does not eat voraciously, he eats selectively. He puts into his mouth that which will both gratify his palate and nourish his body. He brings about that most blessed union of beauty with utility, and the consummation of that marriage results in a supreme benefaction to himself and to those with whom he comes in contact.

The town of Almirante is just about three years old. It consists of a narrow coral-filled spit on which stand the three buildings of which it is composed: the Merchandise with the Superintendent's quarters above, the Mess House where the white men employed in the Merchandise live, and one house which is occupied by

a married employee. To the right of the Merchandise and separated by a water passage-way is the wharf, a big roofed-in concrete affair at which there is generally a steamer loading or unloading every day. The town is about as long as the wharf and a few times as wide. It holds the three buildings comfortably, and allows for an open coral-filled space intersected with drain-pipes, in which the dogs and cats forgather on moon-light and other nights and have it out. Round the spit runs a fine concrete sea-wall which is supposed to be quite six inches above high-water mark, but I know one spot where it goes a few inches under. Still that doesn't matter much, because they don't have tidal waves in lagoons.

The white population is eighteen: sixteen men in the Merchandise, the wife of one, and the Superintendent. When I was there the first time I made it nineteen, and the second it was twenty, for the married lady had had a baby in the meantime. There was a handful of Chinamen, and the rest were a blend.

I used to go out on to the wharf and watch the ships load. In Limon they were loaded by machinery, but at Almirante they hand-loaded, and an expert negro could make as much as four and five pounds a week in the busy time. A train of box-cars would run down the wharf alongside of the ship, and the cars would be pulled up opposite the holds, unloaded and shunted off as they were emptied. Two negroes stood on the car and handed out the bunches, which in turn were handed to two more, who stood upon a trestle between the train and the ship and handed them up to an intermediate platform cushioned with padded sacks. On that platform stood two more negroes, who handed them up to others waiting upon the deck. Here they were examined, graded and passed down by the same stages



LOADING FROM BANANA TRAIN.



PILE OF REJECTS

This fruit is thrown overboard after the ship leaves the wharf

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into the hold. Those that were not considered by the graders fit for packing were thrown in a heap on the deck and pitched overboard on the return to Bocas. All night long the vessels would load, and, lying in my bedroom, separated from the wharf by only the narrow strip of water, I would be glad if it were bananas they were loading instead of steel rails they were *un*loading. Half a hundred niggers singing the bananas into the holds and talking religion in between the loads was a sleeping draught compared with steel rails dropping on to steel rails at the will of a weary stevedore. There are noisier places to sleep in than Piccadilly and quieter ones than the edge of a lagoon.

Life down there is pretty lawless at times, but at times life anywhere is pretty lawless. A half-caste running amok in such a community as that is not so much out of the picture as a gentleman in a lounge suit careering about the Charing Cross Road and letting off a random pistol at the heads of the passers-by. In Central and South America they have revolutions as we have golf championships; and an unbroken course of revolutions must inevitably tend to make life seem fairly cheap. The stevedore I knew most intimately at Almirante had been engaged in eight revolutions in Nicaragua. He gave up his hobby when he married, out of deference to his wife, who, poor foolish twitterer, was afraid for his life. So do weak women with silken meshes of sentiment make powerless the gods of war. He told me this one evening as I stood watching the bananas going in at the ship's side by the light of naphtha torches and to the sound of negroes crooning. It was dull work, comparatively, feeding ships with bananas and emptying them of steel rails, but it was safe, and that was what seemed to matter most to the wife. There had been times, those other days, when no revolution

was considered complete without him. He smiled gently and reminiscently as he recalled them, swearing at the same time in a soft detached voice at a nigger who seemed to be fumbling his job. Those *were* days! It had been a pretty near thing that time when the enemy had run him down to the beach, and the boat that was waiting to take him away if the worst came to the worst suddenly steamed off and left him. And there was an invoice he had at home that was worth keeping. It was made out to Captain Jesse Grant, and was a reply to his request for more men with which to carry on the revolution. The goods came all roped stoutly together, and with them the invoice, "Herewith I send you one hundred and eighty volunteers. If you want more send back the ropes." Yes, bananas were dull after those times.

I was entertained very sumptuously by him at supper one night in his home on the end of the wharf. He lived at Bocas del Toro, but when he came over to look after a ship at Almirante, instead of accepting hospitality, he preferred his own quarters, and made for himself a very comfortable residence out of two empty box-cars, one of which was furnished as a bedroom and the other as a sitting-room. That night ten of us sat down to supper. Captain Jesse, the host of the evening, the Heathen, my host at Almirante, six men from the Mess House, one of whom cooked the supper under the car, and I myself. We had a wonderful stew of spaghetti, pork, tomato purée and oysters, served in a tin milk dish the size of an umbrella, and we drank our claret out of pannikins. There wasn't too much room, but we all sat quite comfortably when we had settled ourselves, and the stew was about the most *de*licious thing in the way of food I've ever tasted. But the heat! Ten people and a spaghetti stew in a banana

box-car under a galvanized iron wharf-roof in the tropics! In the middle of supper a short halt was called on account of the Heathen's bulldog and Captain Jesse's two fox-terriers having got in under the table and started a fight, but they were hauled out and pitched on to the wharf before anything much happened, and we all re-settled ourselves comfortably again and went on with the stew.

I was treated with kindness and courtesy by every one, but I found out afterwards that I made during the evening a rather false step. When the cigarettes were handed round I, without thinking, took one. It seems I shouldn't have. That sort of thing might be done in other places, but it made a distinctly bad impression in box-cars on wharf-ends. I pleaded ignorance, explained where I had come from, and was exonerated. It is interesting to see your London gnat become a camel in the desert. Still I suppose the exchange is fair. If I were to take my supper in a box-car on a Paddington siding and one of the directors was about, he might not say anything to me about it, but he would quite probably wonder deep down in his heart if I were quite nice. And one would not wonder at him wondering.

The year had nearly gone when at last I said good-bye to the tropics and made my way home again. I had gone for three months and stayed close on nine. In the drowse of an eternal summer and the interest of unaccustomed sights one loses count of time. The days are weeks before you have thought of them; the weeks become months while you *are* thinking of them.

On the third of October we slipped out of Kingston Harbour under the star-strewn canopy of a scented Indian night, and twelve days later Cardiff stood on

the beach and waved to us as we passed her on the way to Avonmouth. Such a morning as it was to come back home again! A blue sky, pale-green racing waves, a tang in the air and a warm sun setting fire to the golden trees. The Cornish express picked us up at Bristol and landed us at Paddington two minutes before time; one hundred and seventeen and a half miles in one hundred and twenty minutes. For two hours we flashed through a wonder-world; emerald, russet, crimson, gold, against a cloud-flecked sky of happy blue and under a sun that kissed the gold to song. The colour was like a burst of music. The summer marched under blazoning banners, not to her death but to her rest. Wrapping herself in the jewelled splendour of a gorgeous maturity, she was sweeping out to take her beauty sleep. There was no death, only this renewing, from which she would arise refreshed to queen it in the world again, sending her maidens on before to deck the earth for her arriving. It was a royal exit.

By grey cities and little towns, by winding streams and tall brick chimneys, by ugly suburbs, we flew to the city where I have lived for eight years, the city which I have loved for all my life; the city than which I think I shall never love another more. First known to me through the medium of a ponderous scrap-book pored over from the angle of an old horsehair and walnut sofa, twelve thousand miles lay between the sofa and the scrap-book. To me it was a Mecca of dreams in which in summer-time walked visions in crinolines and poke-bonnets and ridiculous little fringed parasols. And in winter other ladies in tight velvet dresses with gracious smiles and fur cuffs and collars gave benignant pennies to imploring crossing-sweepers. To the country of which that city was the mainspring, belonged the

calm steel-engraved gentlemen with noble brows—and an empty sleeve now and then—who looked out conqueringly from a background of tasselled velvet curtains or forked lightning thunderclouds.

And from that country came the old man on whose knee I would sit to hear about the pictures. He knew it in its reality; and sometimes as he sat bareheaded out in the garden in the cool of the evening he would sing softly to himself, rocking to and fro in the old wicker chair—

> "Buttercups and daisies,
> Oh, the pretty flowers!
> Coming in the spring-time
> To tell of sunny hours."

Something in his voice, I don't know what it was, made my heart nearly break with longing. And I would go to a box and fish out all the Christmas cards that looked like buttercups and daisies, and fill myself with the ecstasy of things I had never seen.

Now I have seen it, and I was no stranger when I came, for I had loved it twenty years before the distance could be bridged. From it now I go often, but always with the same love-song in my heart—

> "Over the world and under the world,
> And back again at the last to you!"

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